THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT ON ACADEMIC STAFF PERFORMANCE IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIAN STATE UNIVERSITIES

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This study examines the relationship between the workplace environment and the performance of academic staff at state universities in South East Nigeria. Using a survey method, data were collected from 267 academic staff members through structured questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The findings indicate significant dissatisfaction with the physical infrastructure, as 26.9% and 13.1% of respondents view it as inadequate or very inadequate, impacting their productivity and performance. Furthermore, the study reveals mixed satisfaction with leadership styles, with 40.1% of respondents expressing dissatisfaction. Solutions to improve the workplace environment are primarily focused on upgrading facilities and enhancing management support, with 35.5% of respondents prioritizing infrastructural improvements. This research highlights the critical need for infrastructure upgrades and better leadership practices to address the challenges faced by academic staff and enhance their job satisfaction and performance.

Keywords: Workplace Environment, Academic Staff Performance, Organizational Culture, Infrastructure, Job Satisfaction

Introduction

The performance of academic staff in universities is a crucial determinant of educational quality and institutional success. Understanding how the workplace environment influences this performance is particularly important in state universities in South East Nigeria. This region presents unique challenges and opportunities that affect the academic staff's working conditions and, consequently, their productivity.

The workplace environment includes various elements such as physical conditions, organizational culture, leadership styles, and available resources. Physical conditions, including the quality of office space, facilities, and technology, have a significant impact on how effectively academic staff can perform their duties. Research has shown that inadequate facilities and poor working conditions often lead to reduced productivity and job dissatisfaction among academic staff (Chukwu & Emeka, 2024).

Organizational culture and leadership styles are also vital aspects of the workplace environment. A positive and supportive organizational culture, combined with effective leadership, tends to enhance job satisfaction and

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performance among academic staff (Smith & Riley, 2020). On the other hand, a negative or unsupportive work culture can lower staff morale and hinder performance (Johnson & Brown, 2021).

In South East Nigeria, state universities face particular challenges that affect the workplace environment. Issues such as inadequate funding, deteriorating infrastructure, and political interference are prominent. These problems contribute to a less conducive work environment, impacting academic staff performance and the overall effectiveness of the institutions (Nwankwo & Uche, 2023).

Furthermore, socio-economic factors like economic instability and regional disparities exacerbate these challenges, affecting staff motivation and productivity (Eze & Ojo, 2024). To address these issues effectively, it is essential to have a detailed understanding of the specific conditions in South East Nigeria and their implications for academic staff performance.

This study aims to explore the relationship between the workplace environment and the performance of academic staff in state universities in South East Nigeria. By examining various aspects of the workplace environment and their effects on academic staff, the research seeks to provide insights that can guide policy and practice, ultimately improving the quality of higher education in the region.

Statement of the Problem

In an ideal setting, state universities in South East Nigeria would offer a workplace environment designed to foster high performance and job satisfaction among academic staff. Such an environment would encompass well-maintained physical facilities, which include up-to-date technology, comfortable workspaces, and adequate resources to support teaching and research activities. Additionally, a supportive organizational culture and effective leadership would be crucial, ensuring that staff members are valued, motivated, and provided with the guidance and professional development opportunities necessary to excel. This optimal environment would not only enhance job satisfaction but also significantly boost productivity, leading to higher quality teaching, research, and overall institutional success.

Contrarily, the current situation in many state universities in South East Nigeria reveals a stark contrast to this ideal. These institutions frequently grapple with a host of challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, which affects the functionality and comfort of workspaces. Insufficient funding further exacerbates the problem, leading to outdated resources and limited access to modern tools essential for effective academic work. Additionally, ineffective leadership often fails to address these issues adequately, contributing to a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction among staff members. The combined effect of these shortcomings results in poor working conditions, low staff morale, and diminished academic performance.

If these systemic problems are not addressed promptly and effectively, the adverse effects on academic staff performance are likely to persist and even worsen. This scenario could lead to a further decline in productivity, escalating job dissatisfaction, and a higher turnover rate among academic staff. The repercussions of such a decline would extend beyond the staff, negatively impacting the overall quality of education and research output of the universities. As a result, the effectiveness and reputation of these institutions could be seriously compromised, ultimately affecting the educational experiences and outcomes for students.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to ascertain the relationship between workplace environment and performance of academic staff of the state universities in south east, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

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i. To assess the impact of physical infrastructure on the performance of academic staff in state universities in South East Nigeria.

ii. To examine the influence of organizational culture and leadership styles on the job satisfaction and performance of academic staff in these universities.

iii. To identify the key challenges faced by academic staff due to the current workplace environment and propose solutions for improvement.

Research Questions

The study provided answers to the following research questions.

i. How does the quality of physical infrastructure affect the performance and job satisfaction of academic staff in state universities in South East Nigeria?

ii. In what ways do organizational culture and leadership styles influence the motivation and productivity of academic staff in these institutions?

iii. What are the main challenges faced by academic staff due to the current workplace environment, and what solutions can be proposed to address these issues effectively?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses in null form (H_0) guided this study

i. There is no significant relationship between the quality of physical infrastructure and the performance of academic staff in state universities in South East Nigeria.

ii. Organizational culture and leadership styles have no significant effect on the job satisfaction and productivity of academic staff in these universities.

iii. The current workplace environment does not significantly impact the challenges faced by academic staff, and proposed solutions do not lead to substantial improvements in their performance.

2. Literature review

Conceptual Review

Concept of Workplace Environment

The workplace environment significantly influences employee performance and well-being, encompassing physical, psychological, and social factors (Oosthuizen, 2018). Understanding these components is crucial for enhancing academic staff performance in higher education institutions. This aspect refers to the quality of physical resources available to employees, such as office space, research facilities, and technological tools. Recent studies emphasize that inadequate infrastructure can hinder academic productivity by creating obstacles to effective work (Baker & Hayes 2020). For instance, outdated technology and insufficient research facilities can limit research capabilities and affect teaching quality, leading to lower staff satisfaction and productivity (Kim *et al*., 2021).

Organizational culture involves the shared values, beliefs, and practices within an institution. A positive organizational culture fosters collaboration, innovation, and job satisfaction, while a negative culture can lead to stress and disengagement (Khan *et al*., 2023). Studies highlight that a supportive and inclusive culture enhances academic staff performance by providing a conducive environment for professional growth and teamwork (Edwards & Johnson, 2022).

Effective administrative support includes resource allocation, clear communication channels, and efficient management practices. Adequate administrative support is linked to higher staff morale and performance, as it

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reduces bureaucratic obstacles and provides essential resources for academic activities (Smith & Lazarus, 2019). Recent research underscores that streamlined administrative processes and responsive support services are critical for maintaining staff productivity and satisfaction (Nguyen *et al.*, 2022).

Opportunities for professional growth, such as training, workshops, and academic conferences, are vital for staff development. Continuous professional development ensures that academic staff stay abreast of current research trends and pedagogical strategies, enhancing their teaching and research capabilities (Johnson & Smith, 2020). Recent findings indicate that institutions investing in professional development programs see improved academic performance and staff retention (Lee *et al.*, 2023).

Performance of Academic Staff

Academic staff performance is typically assessed through teaching effectiveness, research output, and engagement in academic service. These factors are influenced by the quality of the workplace environment.

Teaching Effectiveness:

Teaching effectiveness involves the quality of instruction and student engagement. A supportive work environment, characterized by adequate resources and a positive culture, is shown to enhance teaching effectiveness (Green & Robbins, 2021). Recent studies demonstrate that institutions with robust support systems and professional development opportunities see improved teaching outcomes and higher student satisfaction (Martin & Lee, 2022).

Research Output

Research output, including the quantity and quality of publications, is a critical performance metric. Supportive infrastructure and administrative assistance play a crucial role in facilitating high-quality research. Enhanced research facilities and efficient administrative support are linked to increased research productivity and impact (Thompson & Lee, 2022). Current research highlights that well-resourced institutions achieve better research outcomes and attract higher levels of external funding (Gomez *et al.*, 2023).

Academic Service

Engagement in academic service roles, such as committee work and community outreach, reflects staff contributions beyond teaching and research. A positive workplace environment encourages greater involvement in these activities, as staff feel valued and supported (Wright & Fisher, 2019). Recent studies indicate that a supportive work culture and recognition of service contributions are associated with higher levels of staff engagement and commitment (O'Reilly & McNulty, 2024).

Theoretical Review

This theory was theoretically underpinned on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and supported by Job Characteristics Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory posits that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are driven by two distinct sets of factors: motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators, such as achievement and recognition, are linked to increased job satisfaction and performance, whereas hygiene factors, including working conditions and salary, prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily enhance motivation. This theory is particularly relevant to the study of academic staff in state universities in South East Nigeria. For instance, hygiene factors like physical infrastructure

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and administrative support are crucial for preventing dissatisfaction among staff, while motivators such as opportunities for professional development are essential for boosting job satisfaction and performance.

Job Characteristics Theory

Job Characteristics Theory (JCT), developed by Hackman and Oldham, suggests that job characteristics influence work outcomes through their impact on employees' psychological states. It identifies five core job dimensions—skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback—that affect motivation, satisfaction, and performance. In the context of academic staff at state universities in South East Nigeria, JCT helps explain how diverse job roles (e.g., teaching, research) and the degree of autonomy can enhance job satisfaction and performance. Additionally, effective feedback mechanisms and the perceived significance of academic tasks play a critical role in motivating staff and improving their performance.

Empirical Review

Kim, Cho & Lee (2021) examined the Role of Infrastructure in Academic Research Productivity. The researchers conducted a mixed-method study involving surveys of 150 academic staff members and qualitative interviews with 20 researchers. They found a significant positive correlation between the quality of physical infrastructure and academic research productivity. Improved facilities and modern technology were linked to higher research output and staff satisfaction, highlighting the impact of physical infrastructure on academic effectiveness. Nguyen, Tran & Dao (2022) worked on Administrative Support and Academic Staff Satisfaction. This study used a quantitative survey method with a sample of 200 academic staff members to explore the effects of administrative support on staff satisfaction and performance. The findings revealed that strong administrative support significantly enhances staff satisfaction and performance. Effective resource allocation, clear communication, and responsive administrative practices were crucial in reducing bureaucratic obstacles and improving job satisfaction. Edwards & Johnson (2022) research on Organizational Culture and Staff Performance in Higher Education Institutions. Edwards and Johnson employed a cross-sectional survey with 180 academic staff members and in-depth interviews with 25 participants to assess how organizational culture influences staff performance. They found that a positive organizational culture, marked by supportive leadership and collaboration, significantly improves staff performance and job satisfaction, underscoring the role of a conducive work environment in boosting productivity.

Lee, Wong & Chang (2023) conducted a study on Professional Development and Its Impact on Academic Staff Performance. The study utilized a longitudinal survey of 250 participants and follow-up interviews to examine the impact of professional development on academic staff performance. The researchers found a strong positive relationship between professional development opportunities and staff performance. Continuous training and development were associated with improved teaching effectiveness and research output, highlighting the importance of professional growth in enhancing academic performance.

Martin & Lee (2022) examined Teaching Effectiveness and Institutional Support. Martin and Lee conducted a survey with 220 academic staff members and case studies at three universities to explore the impact of institutional support on teaching effectiveness. Their study concluded that robust institutional support, including adequate resources and professional development, significantly enhances teaching effectiveness. Supportive work environments led to higher student engagement and improved teaching outcomes, illustrating the role of institutional support in boosting teaching quality.

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Ojo and Ibrahim (2022) conducted a cross-sectional survey involving 200 academic staff from selected state universities in South East Nigeria. Their study utilized structured questionnaires and applied descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, including correlation and regression techniques. The results indicated that elements such as office space, resource availability, and administrative support had significant impacts on job performance. Specifically, the availability of resources and administrative support were strongly positively correlated with higher job performance, highlighting that improved infrastructure and support services enhance staff productivity.

Nwankwo and Okoro (2023) examined impact of institutional environment on academic staff performance. They employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews. They surveyed 150 academic staff and conducted interviews with 20 faculty members. The research found that a supportive institutional environment—characterized by job security, professional development opportunities, and a positive organizational culture—had a significant positive effect on academic staff performance. The qualitative data underscored the importance of institutional support in motivating and enhancing staff effectiveness.

Eze and Nwosu (2021) used a quantitative approach, surveying 180 academic staff members. The study employed multiple regression analysis to assess the impact of both physical (e.g., office facilities, classroom conditions) and social (e.g., collegial support, communication) aspects of the work environment on staff efficiency. The findings revealed that both physical and social environment factors significantly influenced staff efficiency. Well-maintained office facilities and positive collegial relationships were particularly associated with higher efficiency levels, suggesting that improvements in these areas could boost academic performance.

Chukwu and Emeka (2024) conducted a longitudinal study tracking changes over time in the workplace environment and their effects on academic staff performance. They collected data through periodic surveys over one academic year involving 250 staff members. The study used ANOVA and longitudinal data analysis to demonstrate that improvements in the workplace environment, such as enhanced facilities and increased managerial support, led to significant improvements in staff performance over time. This highlights the importance of ongoing investment in the work environment to maintain and enhance staff performance.

Umeh and Obasi (2022) utilized a quantitative survey approach with a sample of 160 academic staff members. They employed statistical methods including correlation analysis and structural equation modeling (SEM) to explore the relationship between workplace climate and productivity. Their study found that a positive workplace climate—marked by supportive leadership and a collaborative work culture—significantly impacted academic staff productivity. The results indicated that a supportive workplace climate directly influenced job satisfaction, which in turn enhanced productivity.

3. Methodology

Research Design

The study employs a survey method to investigate the relationship between the workplace environment and the performance of academic staff at state universities in South East, Nigeria.

Setting

The research conducted in the South East region of Nigeria, specifically across the five state universities located in this area.

Target Population

The target population is 800 individuals which consist of academic staff from these five state universities.

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Sample Size

To determine the appropriate sample size, the Taro Yamane formula is used. The formula is: $n = \dfrac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

Where:

- •n = sample size
- •N = population size
- •e = margin of error (0.05 for a 95% confidence level)

$$n = \frac{800}{1+800\times0.0025} = \frac{800}{1+2} = \frac{800}{3} = \frac{800}{?} = 267 \qquad 1+800(0.05)^2$$

Thus, a sample size of approximately 267 academic staff members were selected for the study.

Sampling Techniques

A stratified random sampling technique was adopted to ensure that the sample accurately represents the different departments and faculties within the universities. This approach involved dividing the academic staff into strata based on departments or faculties and then randomly selecting participants from each stratum.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to assess various dimensions of the workplace environment and its impact on academic staff performance. The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended questions to capture quantitative and qualitative data.

Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through a combination of surveys and face-to-face interviews. The surveys were distributed to the sampled academic staff members, while in-depth interviews were conducted with a subset of participants to gain deeper insights into their experiences and perceptions.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics and frequency tables were used to analyze the collected data. Descriptive statistics summarized and described the features of the dataset, while frequency tables provided a clear representation of the distribution of responses concerning the workplace environment and academic staff performance.

4. Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: How would you rate the adequacy of the physical infrastructure (e.g., office space, laboratories, libraries) in your department for supporting your academic work?

Options/Responses	Frequency (n=267)	Percentage (%)
Very Adequate	30	11.2
Adequate	70	26.2
Neutral	60	22.5
Inadequate	72	26.9
Very Inadequate	35	13.1
Total	**267**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

This table illustrates the respondents' views on the adequacy of physical infrastructure in their department for supporting their academic work. The majority of academic staff perceive the infrastructure as either inadequate or very inadequate, with 26.9% and 13.1% respectively, indicating significant concerns about the current

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facilities. Although a smaller portion of respondents find the infrastructure adequate (26.2%) or very adequate (11.2%), a notable percentage remain neutral (22.5%). This distribution suggests that there is a general dissatisfaction with the physical infrastructure, highlighting a potential area for improvement to better support academic staff performance.

Table 2: To what extent do you believe that the condition of physical infrastructure (e.g., maintenance, facilities) affects your productivity and overall performance?

Options/Responses	Frequency (n=267)	Percentage (%)
Strongly Affects	85	31.8
Moderately Affects	92	34.5
Slightly Affects	56	21.0
Does Not Affect	30	11.2
Not Sure	4	1.5
Total	**267**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

This table illustrates the respondents' views on the extent to which the condition of physical infrastructure affects their productivity and overall performance. A significant portion of respondents, 31.8% and 34.5%, feel that the condition of infrastructure either strongly or moderately affects their productivity, indicating a substantial impact. Meanwhile, 21.0% believe it slightly affects their performance, and only 11.2% feel that it does not affect them at all. A small percentage, 1.5%, are unsure about the impact. These findings highlight the critical role that the condition of physical infrastructure plays in influencing academic staff performance and underscore the need for addressing infrastructure-related issues to enhance productivity.

Table 3: How satisfied are you with the current leadership style in your department?

Options/Responses	Frequency (n=267)	Percentage (%)
Very Satisfied	25	9.4
Satisfied	60	22.5
Neutral	75	28.1
Dissatisfied	75	28.1
Very Dissatisfied	32	12.0
Total	**267**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

This table illustrates the respondents' satisfaction with the current leadership style in their department. The results reveal a mixed response among the academic staff: 9.4% are very satisfied, while 22.5% are satisfied with the leadership style. A significant portion, 28.1%, are neutral, indicating neither strong approval nor disapproval. Similarly, 28.1% of respondents are dissatisfied, and 12.0% are very dissatisfied. This distribution highlights that while some staff members are content with the leadership, a considerable number are either neutral or dissatisfied, suggesting areas where leadership practices could be improved to better meet the needs and expectations of the academic staff.

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Table 4: To what extent does the organizational culture (e.g., teamwork, communication, support) contribute to your job satisfaction and performance?

Options/Responses	Frequency (n=267)	Percentage (%)
Significantly Contributes	45	16.9
Moderately Contributes	80	29.9
Slightly Contributes	75	28.1
Does Not Contribute	50	18.7
Not Sure	17	6.4
Total	**267**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

This table illustrates the respondents' views on how organizational culture contributes to their job satisfaction and performance. A combined 46.8% of respondents believe that organizational culture either significantly or moderately contributes to their satisfaction and performance. Specifically, 16.9% find it significantly contributes, while 29.9% see a moderate contribution. In contrast, 18.7% feel it does not contribute at all, and 6.4% are unsure. These results suggest that while a substantial portion of staff values the role of organizational culture in enhancing their job satisfaction, there is still a notable percentage who do not perceive a strong impact. This indicates the need for universities to actively improve aspects of organizational culture to better support and engage academic staff.

Table 5: What is the most significant challenge you face due to the current workplace environment?

Options/Responses	Frequency (n=267)	Percentage (%)
Inadequate Facilities	120	44.9
Poor Maintenance	65	24.3
Lack of Support from Management	40	15.0
Poor Communication	30	11.2
Other (Please Specify)	12	4.5
Total	**267**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

This table illustrates the most significant challenges faced by academic staff due to the current workplace environment. A majority of respondents, 44.9%, identify inadequate facilities as the most pressing issue, highlighting a major area of concern. Poor maintenance follows as a significant challenge for 24.3% of staff, while 15.0% cite a lack of support from management. Poor communication is noted by 11.2% of respondents, and 4.5% mention other unspecified challenges. These results underscore the need for targeted interventions to address the most critical issues, such as improving facilities and maintenance, and enhancing support from management to create a more effective and supportive work environment.

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Table 6: What do you believe would be the most effective solution to improve your current workplace environment?

Options/Responses	Frequency (n=267)	Percentage (%)
Upgrading Facilities and Infrastructure	95	35.5
Enhancing Support and Communication from Management	70	26.2
Improving Organizational Culture	55	20.6
Providing More Professional Development Opportunities	35	13.1
Other (Please Specify)	12	4.5
Total	**267**	**100%**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

This table illustrates the respondents' views on the most effective solution to improve their current workplace environment. The majority of academic staff, 35.5%, believe that upgrading facilities and infrastructure would be the most impactful solution. Enhancing support and communication from management is also considered significant by 26.2% of respondents. Additionally, 20.6% think improving organizational culture would be beneficial, while 13.1% favor providing more professional development opportunities. A smaller portion, 4.5%, suggest other solutions. These responses indicate a clear preference for infrastructural improvements and better management practices as key areas for enhancing the workplace environment.

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Findings

i. The survey results reveal that a substantial number of academic staff find the current physical infrastructure in their departments to be inadequate or very inadequate, with 26.9% and 13.1% respectively. This dissatisfaction correlates with the belief that the condition of physical infrastructure significantly impacts their productivity and overall performance, as 66.3% of respondents feel it either strongly or moderately affects their work. The findings suggest an urgent need for improvements in facilities and maintenance to enhance academic staff performance and satisfaction.

ii. The responses indicate a mixed perception of leadership styles within the departments. While 31.9% of respondents express satisfaction with the current leadership, a notable 40.1% are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. Additionally, a significant 28.1% of respondents are neutral regarding their satisfaction with leadership. These results reflect varied experiences with leadership and highlight an opportunity for enhancing leadership practices and engagement to improve overall job satisfaction among academic staff.

iii. When it comes to improving the workplace environment, 35.5% of respondents believe that upgrading facilities and infrastructure would be the most effective solution. Enhancing support and communication from management is also a critical concern for 26.2% of respondents. While improving organizational culture and increasing professional development opportunities were mentioned, they were less prioritized. These findings emphasize the need for targeted investments

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in infrastructure and management practices to address the primary concerns of academic staff and foster a more conducive working environment.

Conclusion

The study highlights significant concerns and preferences among academic staff regarding their workplace environment at state universities in South East Nigeria. The findings reveal a notable dissatisfaction with the physical infrastructure, indicating that many staff members view their current facilities as inadequate or very inadequate. This dissatisfaction is closely linked to perceived negative impacts on productivity and performance, emphasizing the urgent need for infrastructural improvements.

Additionally, the survey uncovers mixed feelings about leadership styles within the departments. While some academic staff are satisfied with the current leadership, a substantial proportion expresses dissatisfaction. This variation in satisfaction suggests that leadership practices may require adjustments to better align with staff needs and expectations, ultimately improving job satisfaction and effectiveness.

Finally, the preferred solutions for enhancing the workplace environment point to a strong desire for better facilities and infrastructure. Enhancing management support and communication also emerges as a significant concern. Addressing these key areas—upgrading infrastructure, improving management practices, and fostering a supportive organizational culture—can lead to substantial improvements in job satisfaction and overall performance among academic staff.

Recommendations

i. To address the widespread dissatisfaction with the physical infrastructure, it is essential for university administration to prioritize and allocate resources towards upgrading facilities and maintenance. This includes improving office spaces, laboratories, and libraries to meet the needs of academic staff. Enhanced infrastructure will not only support better performance but also contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction and productivity.

ii. Given the mixed responses regarding leadership styles, universities should focus on enhancing leadership and management practices. This can be achieved by implementing leadership training programs, fostering open communication channels, and actively seeking feedback from academic staff. By improving managerial support and responsiveness, universities can address the concerns of staff, increase job satisfaction, and create a more positive work environment.

iii. To improve the overall workplace environment, universities should work on fostering a supportive and collaborative organizational culture. This includes encouraging teamwork, improving communication, and providing professional development opportunities. Creating a culture that values staff contributions and provides adequate support will help in addressing some of the identified challenges and enhance job satisfaction and performance across the institution.

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