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## EFFECTS OF DECENTRALIZATION AND WORKPLACE MOTIVATION ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE IN DONGA LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCIL, TARABA STATE

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**ABSTRACT:** *The phenomenon of achieving positive organizational performance has preoccupied management research for decades. These efforts have always faced challenges bringing about dismal organizational performance especially in most LGAs across Nigeria. This conceptualized a model to address this concern based on decentralization, workplace motivation and organizational performance, which differ in intervention from prior studies. Four hypotheses were created around these variables to be tested. The study surveyed a sample of 327 staff of Donga LGA, using cross-sectional design, and multiple regressions model to analyze the data with the aid of SPSS software. The results of the analysis revealed that decentralization was positively related with organizational performance and workplace motivation. On the other hand, workplace motivation was positively related with organizational performance, and also partially mediated the relationship between decentralization and organizational performance. The study recommended that authorities of Donga LGA need to improve upon the level at which decentralization and motivation are practiced, and also determine revenue sharing formula based on the needs of individual department, while each department should be allowed to decide on how to use their budgetary allocations. Again, workplace motivation should form a pivotal basis in designing decentralization structure of the local governments to be able to sustain its mediating influence in the linkage between decentralization and organizational performance. It was concluded that decentralization and workplace motivation are crucial elements to improve the organizational performance, but they are poorly practiced in Donga local government council.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Decentralization, Workplace Motivation, Organizational Performance*

## INTRODUCTION

Organizational performance evaluates the extent to which set goals are achieved and also provides direction for improvement. The performance of any organization is impacted by environmental factors, working conditions, organizational culture, political factors, economic factors, innovations, leadership, organizational structure, and human resource management (Hussain et al., 2023; Cera & Kusaku, 2020). An assessment of these factors suggests that human resource management plays a crucial role of coordinating the rest to achieve better organizational performance (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). In this regard, it is necessary to foster human capital development which enhances the productive capacities of employees (World Bank, 2022). For example, the human capital development index (scores on 1-0) of countries shows that Singapore has 0.88, Hong Kong 0.81, and Canada 0.80, while Nigeria has 0.36, rated 168<sup>th</sup> out of 173 alongside Ghana 0.45, and Kenya 0.55 (World Bank, 2022). These indices suggest that countries with high scores have a work system that favors better organizational performance (especially local government), which result in weighty national economic progress and other advancements; compared to that of Nigeria.

The aggregated organizational performance of local government councils (LGCs) is crucial for the overall level of economic growth and development experienced in most countries (Sueyoshi & Goto, 2023). It is pivotal in contributing to national economic development and growth (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, 2022). In this study, organizational performance is viewed in terms of revenue generation, operational efficiency, and quality service delivery dimensions which have dominated research efforts to date (Filho et al., 2020; Gupta et al., 2020). Revenue generation means monies earned by the local governments to finance programs to the extent of covering expenses in each fiscal year (Brimoh & Onuoha, 2022). Operational efficiency takes into consideration the positive outcomes of various departments, material resources and personnel efforts in terms of coordination to discharge duties effectively and efficiently (Chmielewska et al., 2022). Quality of service delivery is viewed as the extent to which citizens are able to access improved basic social services over time (McLaughlin, 2021). When an organization achieve a good balance of these dimensions it will likely result in a better organizational performance, but this is not the case with many LGCs in Nigeria which cannot pursue effective economic development policies. As a result, to investigate the organizational performance of LGCs better, decentralization is necessary.

Decentralization is viewed in this study as the statutory allocation of decision-making and program initiation, and the division of rights to all the hierarchies of local governments. Mostly, scholars proxied decentralization on political, bureaucratic, administrative, fiscal and market or economic factors (Okorie et al., 2022), this study on the other hand considers the last three for its investigation. Administrative decentralization deals with sharing of responsibility for the planning, and management of certain public functions to subordinate units in LGCs, by utilizing communication medium that favors delegation and devolution of authorities. Fiscal decentralization means the distribution of financial responsibilities across various LG departments and their hierarchies for adequate provision of critical needs of the people (Olabanji et al., 2020). Also, fiscal decentralization entails flexibility in revenue collection and disbursement for better service provision (Amire & Okufuwa, 2020). This suggests that different ways of mobilizing revenues and engaging expenditures have to be explored. Economic decentralization deals with privatization and deregulation of responsibility and service provision

in order to build a marketable environment (Oyededeji et al., 2019). Overall, studies have linked decentralization and organizational performance (e.g., Alamsa et al., 2019; Away et al., 2021), implying that appropriate decentralization creates autonomy and greater flexibility for all cadres to participate in decision-making. In line with García-Juan et al. (2018), effective decentralization enriches human resource management which strengthens workplace motivation.

Workplace motivation means the factors (both intrinsic and extrinsic) that can influence the staff to carry out their jobs effectively and efficiently. Workplace motivation sometimes emanate from making rational decisions (Padave et al., 2021), or from the psychological condition of the interaction between staff needs and exterior factors (Yang et al., 2021). Workplace motivation is associated to the mental state and human attitude that delivers self-drive towards satisfying needs. Erstwhile studies have established a relationship between workplace motivation and organizational performance (e.g., Afif et al's., 2023; Kurniasih et al., 2022; Ismael et al., 2022). Furthermore, Megawati (2022) presents work motivation as a climate that fosters sustained organizational performance.

Deducing from the aforementioned discussions, previous studies have found positive relationship between decentralization and organizational performance (Away et al., 2021; Alamsa et al., 2019). The results of these studies demonstrate consistency in findings. Nevertheless, these scholars did not consider the mechanism that could sustain the relationship between decentralization and organizational performance. In view of this, current study objective is to investigate the effects of decentralization on organizational performance, and introducing workplace motivation as a mediator to fill the knowledge gap in the existing relationship. Thus, the study is domiciled in Donga LGC of Taraba state, Nigeria where it has not been done before.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is dismal level of organizational performance very prominent in LGCs administrations where stakeholders attributed it to poor human capital development, lack of autonomy, lack of funds and corruption (Hussain et al., 2023; Obisanya & Hassan, 2022). Poor organizational performance of LGCs is one of the reasons approximately 46% of the people live below the poverty line, nearly two thirds lacking access to adequate sanitation, an average life expectancy of 53 years, and an average per capita GDP of \$5900 (World Bank 2017). The organizational performance predicament of most local governments (out of the 774) in Nigeria, particularly those that are not state capitals or part of the metropolis, has been backward. OECD records in 2022 revealed that such LGs performance average in terms of percentage are much lower than the average of their contemporaries (with low- and lower-middle-income characteristics) whether within or outside the country. Dealing on study context for instance, Donga LG is not among the 10 best performing and developed LGs (such as Eti Osa LGC, Lagos Island, Bonny Island, Calabar Municipal, Ibadan Northwest LGC etc.) in Nigeria. Poor performing LGCs could have detrimental effect on investments, revenue mobilization, infrastructural development, productivity and on the city's attractiveness to foreign investors (OECD, 2022). These consequences are felt not only at the LG level alone, but also at the national scale. Additionally, all sorts of crimes thrive the most in underdeveloped local governments.

Arising from these, many local government communities still lack amenities/infrastructure needed for quality standard of living, and this can be reflected in the socio-economic status of the

country. For instance, the OECD's socio-economic data indicate that Spain has a landmass of 504,712 km<sup>2</sup>, 8,124 municipal areas, 46,528,000 inhabitants, and €25,010 GDP per capita (OECD, 2018). In comparison, Nigeria's indices (landmass 923,768 km<sup>2</sup>, LGC 774, population 200 million, and GDP per capita \$2,065.75  $\equiv$  €1,870.60) suggest that organizational performance is not adequate in all LGs, contributing to unplanned urban migration pressure (Nigeria High Commission, 2023; World Bank, 2023; Oncel & Levend, 2023). This implies a huge proportion of investors, revenue, quality life and productivity has been lost due to inadequate performance. To investigate why a lot of LGs of Nigeria are underperforming, this study examines the mediating role of workplace motivation in the relationship between decentralization and organizational performance in Donga LGC, guided by the framework in figure 1.

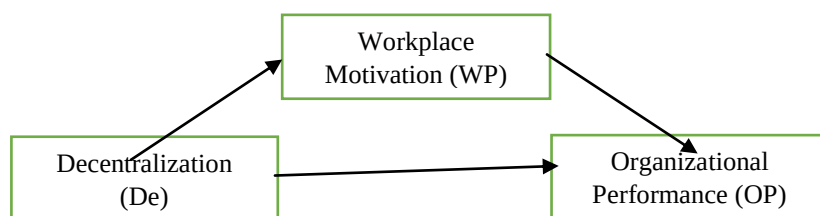


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## Research Hypotheses

To evaluate the objectives of this study in statistical facts, the following null hypotheses (Ho) are projected for further validation.

**Ho1:** Decentralization does not promote organizational performance in Donga local government area.

**Ho2:** Decentralization does not encourage workplace motivation in Donga local government area.

**Ho3:** Workplace motivation does not stimulate organizational performance in Donga local government area.

**Ho4:** Workplace motivation does not mediate the relationship between decentralization and organizational performance in Donga local government area.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Organizational Performance

The concept of organizational performance (OP) is to ascertain how well an entity is progressing with its activities or goals. Stoner et al. (2012) argue that organizational performance is determined by organizational efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the right objectives and building good relations between an organization and its environment. On account of this, studies of have stressed that OP is not a one-dimensional construct but includes many different dimensions (Andersen, et al., 2016). The dimensions of organizational performance constitute more classical concepts such as efficiency, effectiveness, and financial performance, as well as more governance-related concepts such as societal outcomes and responsiveness to citizens (George et al., 2019). Recent contributions revealed that performance analysis is not based on

one-dimensional financial approach but multidimensional evaluations, specifically in the public sector (Petrescu 2019; Filho et al., 2020). Thus, it was also noted that the operationalization of organizational performance in the public service was done based on the dimensions of quality, perceived satisfaction, policy, as well as financial results (Filho et al., 2020). Although, these scholars were able to measure the achievement of the goal stipulated for the financial and quality dimensions, the measurement of the perception of organizational performance in the public service included the assessment of: the quality of the service provided; the financial result in relation to the established revenue goals; the satisfaction of the public served; and the positive perception of other units and actors involved with the organization. More so, scholars have called for more insights into how OP dimensions are particularly impacted by management, organization, and environmental variables (Walker & Andrews 2015). In line with perspective of Chmielewska et al. (2022); Gupta et al. (2020), current study considers the dimension of organizational performance for local government service based on revenue generation goal, operational efficiency, and quality of service delivery.

### **Decentralization**

Decentralization captures an organization's potential to effectively engage employees at all levels and to enlarge employees' influence on organizational performance (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020). Decentralization is an important governance mechanism that may influence the development of organization in the public sector (Uddin, 2018). Decentralization can advance both top-down and bottom-up influence because it allows top management to better communicate with lower-level employees regarding important organizational decisions and enables these employees down the hierarchy to contribute ideas and shape the organization's strategy (Li et al., 2018). What these suggest are that a perfect decentralization structure is crucial for employee efficiency (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). Wooll (2021) described decentralization as a type of organizational structure in which daily operation and decision-making responsibilities are delegated by top management to middle and lower-level managers in the organization, allowing top managers to focus more on major decisions. Henry Fayol made it explicitly clear that when the power to make decisions rest on the top management alone, it is called centralization, but when the power of decision-making is given to the person performing the job, it is called decentralization. Decentralization in LG context comprises a lot of factors which must be carefully analyzed before deciding whether to reorganize existing structure of finance, administration, and service delivery (Ilasco, 2021). Most scholars adapt decentralization from the perspective of Falleti namely political, administrative, bureaucratic and fiscal (Okorie et al., 2022). Above all, today's government decentralization structures have gone digital (utilizing Artificial Intelligence and blockchain technologies) for effective and efficient governance administration (Vergne, 2020). For Yadav & Rani (2022), digital decentralized structure foster e-governance model for G2C (Government to Citizens), G2B (Government to Business), G2E (Government to employees), and G2G (Government to Government); supporting work motivation.

### **Workplace Motivation**

The purpose of workplace motivation is to stimulate in employees the inspiration for work. With workplace motivation, organizational leaders are expected to encourage their followers or subordinates to work successfully in the pursuit of goals. Motivation relates to the driving force behind which a worker puts into pursuing a goal. Based on the opinion of Hu et al. (2022),

workplace motivation is essential for managers to understand certain people's behaviors and influence them to work according to the organization's needs. Sometimes motivation is instinctive (influenced by instinct), and sometimes it arises from rational decisions (Padave et al., 2021). Recently, Neumann & Scott (2023) adapted dimensions (self-sacrifice, compassion attraction to policymaking, and commitment to the public interest) of workplace motivation suitable for public service management. Compassion, attraction to policymaking, and commitment to the public interest can be linked to affective, rational, and normative motive to engage in public service delivery. In particular, compassion reflects the degree to which individuals identify with the needs and suffering of others. Attraction to policymaking indicates the extent to which individuals are attracted to the process of policymaking, while commitment to the public interest assesses the extent to which individuals identify with the public interest and traditional public values such as equity, accountability, and concern for future generations. More so, self-sacrifice is the willingness to deprave oneself of services of needs and interests to rather contribute to the well-being of society (Neumann & Scott, 2023). Self-sacrifice dimension has been described as the altruistic foundation of the other three dimensions (Kim & Vandenabeele, 2010). On the whole, these dimensions can be categorized under intrinsic or extrinsic forms of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Therefore, when management or organizational policies put the interest of workers first, motivation is inevitable.

### **Decentralization and Organizational Performance**

In the study between decentralization and organizational performance, Away et al. (2021) found that delegating decision-making power to experts in need of knowledge on a particular issue, technology, product, or market, has an effect on improving organizational performance. A pure decentralization was attributed to greater flexibility and less coordination. Similarly, Alamsa et al. (2019) ascertain that decentralization impacted managerial performance. This aligns with the debate for or against a paradigm shift from traditional (centralized) organizational models to post-modern (decentralized) organizational models in the face of challenges. For Bashir (2015), the performance of firms increases as the decentralization rises. This suggests that when firms offer opportunity to each employee to participate in decision-making, it actually gives them the freedom to make their own decisions in favor of firm. Therefore, organizational structures especially large ones cannot be controlled and administered by a single individual, and if not so, they may not perform as good as those with decentralized structures. It can be seen that a few empirical studies exist between decentralization and organizational performance and the results were consistent especially because large organizations do better with decentralized structures. This therefore warrants the testing of hypothesis to ascertain whether decentralization can promote organizational performance in Donga local government area.

### **Decentralization and Workplace Motivation**

The influence of decentralized communication on employees' work satisfaction drawing on perspectives from the Oti Regional Coordinating Council in Ghana, was examined by Amadu & Anyarayer (2022). The study revealed that the channels operational in the organization as tools of communication are face-to-face discussions, e-mails, memos, departmental meetings, group/team discussions, in-house training sessions, management/employee briefing sessions, labor union meetings, suggestion boxes, notices, and assemblies. Further findings indicated that most of the employees were satisfied with the corporate communication tools used in the organization. In other words, there was a significant relationship between decentralized communication and employee motivation which further enhances employee job performance. In

this sense, organizations that want to successfully retain a satisfied workforce must be willing to employ a communication style that is more participative and employee-supportive. In a similar way, Han et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between organizational structure and employees' motivation in information technology services industry. The result showed that decentralized organizational structure is a better organizational structure to increase employees' motivation. As such, employees' participation in decision-making would increase their motivation and improve their work performance. Herzberg's hygiene factors were found to relate well to employees' motivation and organizational structure. It was regarded as a necessity for an IT Services industry to decentralize its organizational structure in order to have a great improvement on employees' motivation. The findings of empirical studies reviewed in this section affirm the existence of positive and significant relationship between decentralization and workplace motivation. This relationship is better articulated with the presence of decentralized communication structure. Thus, it is appropriate to hypothesize whether decentralization can encourage workplace motivation in Donga local government area.

### **Workplace Motivation and Organizational Performance**

The impact of management style, activity delight, and paintings surroundings on worker motivation to enhance the overall performance of Islamic banks in Indonesia was investigated by Afif et al. (2023). Advantageous effect of management style, activity delight, and paintings surroundings on worker motivation and the effect of worker motivation on the overall performance of Islamic banks in Indonesia were found. In Kurniasih et al. (2022), motivation exhibited a significant effect on employee performance. Judging from the Herberg's two factors theory, motivation is very instrumental to performance because if extrinsic factors could not drive employee performance efforts, intrinsic factors would do, and vice versa. Ismael et al. (2022) revealed that motivation was positively significant with the productivity of the organization at pharmaceutical Industries in Kurdistan region of Iraq. Employee motivation and citizenship behaviors formed important issues in organizational behavior. Furthermore, Megawati's (2022) results showed that work motivation with work climate can impact on employees' performance through job satisfaction. This implies that work motivation and work climate are necessary for sustained employee performance which eventual reflect in organizational performance.

More so, Hajiali et al.'s (2022) study established that work motivation affected performance directly. Also, employee motivation in terms of existence, connectedness, and growth was low, but it was necessary to improve employee job satisfaction. The study by Widarko & Anwarodin (2022) established a direct effect of motivation on organizational performance of civil servants in Blitar Regency, East Java Province, Indonesia. Such effect was better with organizational citizenship behavior for employees who possess high intrinsic motivation. In another study, Nasution & Priangkatara (2022) indicated that work discipline has a significant influence on employee performance at office Kantor Badan Pengelolaan Keuangan dan Aset Daerah Kabupaten Langkat. Equally, work motivation has a significant effect on employee performance compliance. Then together, work discipline and work motivation had a moderate influence on employee performance. Overall, studies reviewed on this relationship point out that workplace motivation is frequently positive on organizational performance. This therefore supports the hypothesis of whether workplace motivation can stimulate organizational performance in Donga local government area.

### **Mediation of Workplace Motivation**

The inclusion of a mediator in a relationship proceeds from satisfying certain conditions. Mediation condition demands that whenever there are consistent findings between the independent and dependent variables, it is appropriate to investigate how to sustain such relationship. In this case, the empirical studies conducted between decentralization and organizational performance reveals a positive and significant link exists among them. The mediating role of workplace motivation is expected to create work inspiration from decentralization structure and pass better influences to performance. Workplace motivation which deals with how staff of the local government can develop impetus is such that ought to be predicted by decentralization. Logically on this, decentralization helps to create autonomous decision makers, and off course, people would conspicuously identify and be responsible for their action-oriented decisions. In terms of empirical evidence supporting the mediating role of workplace motivation in the relationship between decentralization and organizational performance, there is little or no existing findings. This also informed the need for invoking theoretical framework of systems theory and Herzberg's two-factor together to provide reasonable explanations of this relationship. Arising from the aforesaid submissions, it is appropriate to test the hypothesis of whether workplace motivation can mediate the relationship between decentralization and organizational performance in Donga local government area.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theories (systems theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor) selected for this study have provided relevant explanation reason behind the conceptual framework. In other words, systems theory serves as underpinning theory while Herzberg's two-factor theory serves as a supporting theory.

#### **Systems Theory**

The systems theory of organization started in the early 1950s by Ludwig von Bertalanffy, whose ideas became the foundation for General systems theory, also regarded as theory of everything (Weicheng, 2021). Systems theory assumes that the organization is a cohesive group of interrelated, interdependent elements that can be natural or human-made. A system is expected to be more than the sum of its parts if it expresses synergy or emergent behavior. Based on the system theory's assumptions, decentralization structure may be open if all the hierarchies (especially the lower cadres) in local governments are given the authority to make and enforce certain decisions without involving the top officers (Gordon, 2022). Also, when these different hierarchies harmonize their operations, the result will be effective performance outcomes (Halloui, et al., 2022). In this regard, the systems theory proposes that the different departments and their hierarchies in the local government are products of complex systems, because they cannot perform their functions in isolation (Siegenfeld & Bar-Yam, 2020). As such, decentralization structure is influenced by a variety of factors that integrate together as a system of public set-up. These factors include the Scheme of Service for Local Government Employees, and the yearly plan of action, which can all influence how individuals act and think (OECD, 2017). Systems theory has been very useful in helping organizations to consider holistic patterns in the metaphysical contexts, and the public service approach aims for achieving an integrated and balanced whole in using decentralization to achieve positive performance. In this study, systems theory is used in underpinning the relationship between decentralization and organizational performance. Nevertheless, the systems theory is limited in the study for not being

able to explain can be inspired to work well in the system. This therefore became necessary to introduce a motivation theory to achieve such effect.

### **Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

The Herzberg's Two-factor theory also known as motivator-hygiene theory was proposed by Frederick Herzberg in 1959. Accordingly, there are some job factors that result in satisfaction while there are other job factors that prevent dissatisfaction. According to Herzberg (1959), the opposite of "Satisfaction" is "No satisfaction" and the opposite of "Dissatisfaction" is "No Dissatisfaction". Hygiene factors are those job factors which are essential for existence of motivation at workplace, and do not lead to positive satisfaction for long-term, but where these are non-existent at workplace, they lead to dissatisfaction (Kurt, 2021). These factors (called dissatisfiers) are extrinsic to work, and they include pay, administrative policies, fringe benefits, physical working conditions, status, inter-personal relationship and job security. On the other hand, motivational factors yield positive satisfaction and they are in-built to work (Tripathy & Sahoo, 2020). These factors (e.g., achievement, recognition, nature of work, responsibility, promotion, growth etc.) motivate the employees for a superior performance as they are called satisfiers and are found in performing certain functions. The local government staff in their hierarchies can find these factors intrinsically rewarding to their psychological needs. The Two-Factor theory is related to this current study as a supporting theory as it explains how workplace motivation can be realized to influence performance (Vinz, 2022; Snape & Snape, 2006). In other words, the theory connects the motivation behind extrinsic and intrinsic factors to organizational performance (Yongo & Oki, 2021). Overall, Herzberg's two-factor theory can help regulate work relationships for all cadres of LGCs.

### **MEHODOLOGY**

The methodology of this study was planned according to positivist world view and this provided the structure for using a quantitative research method. As a result, the cross-sectional (survey) design was adopted for data collection. This enables each of the participants to respond to the same type of instrument within a particular period of the research time horizon. Furthermore, the non-contrived setting was followed in order not to interrupt the functions of LGC staff during data collection. Also, the organizational unit of analysis was adopted for investigation, though the responses were provided by individual staff on behalf of the LGC. The reason for this is to get the opinion of each staff on how the LGC has decentralized its structure and also create motivational factors. Likewise, many of the staff directly involved with job responsibilities around the performance would be able to tell the direction of performance of the LGC. On account of this, the study population consists of 2,158 staff of Donga local government area which is divided into 985 senior staff and 1,173 junior staff (Donga LGA Budget Department, 2022). This population cuts across the departments of Donga LGA which administrative, agriculture, budget and planning, finance, legislative council, primary health care, social development, and works. In this case, the online sample size calculator (from Calculator.net) was utilized to determine a representative sample size of 327 (senior-149 and junior-178) staff, using a confidence level of 95%, implying the real value was within  $\pm 5\%$  of the measured/surveyed value.

The study utilized questionnaire instrument to elicit data from respondents. While the questionnaire has four sections: A was semi-structured to capture demographic information of

respondents; B for organizational performance, C for decentralization, and D for workplace motivation; structured with closed-ended interval response formats. Based on the research design, the sections B-D structured with response items in the form of a 5 Likert rating scale of 1 - 5 representing, 1-for strongly disagree and 5- for strongly agree while 3 represents neutral. Besides, in developing the questionnaire, major tenets of theories used and existing scales on similar issues were considered to enhance its precision and validity. In line with this, the organizational performance variable was operationalized as work outcomes of local government staff in terms of mobilizing better revenue, operational efficiency and social service delivery. Thus, organizational performance was measured by adapting a previously validated scale from Jyoti & Rani (2017). On the other hand, decentralization was operationalized as granting all cadres of the LGs the authority to take decisions and execute certain functions based on administrative, fiscal, and economic factors. Thus, the decentralization variable was adapted from Okorie et al. (2022) previously validated scale which measured the extent of implementation of decentralization dimensions in local government administration. Also, workplace motivation was operationalized as factors or reasons responsible for inspiring staff to work towards goal attainment. Workplace motivation variable was adapted from Kuswati's (2020) used previously to measure motivational elements.

In considering method of data analysis, the multiple regression analysis was used with the aid of SPSS version 26.0. The multiple regression analysis is used when two or more variables predict another known as the outcome variable. Also, there should be: one dependent only and to be measured on a continuous scale (interval or ratios); two or more independent variables; independence of observation using Durbin-Watson statistic; linear relationship and homoscedasticity (Zach, 2021). The research model specification for the multiple regression analysis is stated in mathematical formats as:  $OP = \beta_0 + \beta_1 De + \beta_2 WM + \beta_3 DeWM + \epsilon$ . Where OP is organizational performance,  $\beta_0$  is constant,  $\beta_1$ -  $\beta_3$  is Coefficients of independent and mediating variables (Decentralization-De, and Workplace Motivation-WM), and  $\epsilon$  is the Error term given at 5% level of significance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results presentations consider the response rate from questionnaire administration, respondents' profile and data screening, using the descriptive statistics. In terms of the data screening, outliers, data normality, multi-collinearity, correlation and model fit were assessed. This was followed by test of hypotheses and eventually, the discussion of findings.

### Results

Questionnaire was administered directly by the researcher with the help of research assistants. Out of 327 (100%) copies of the questionnaire distributed to respondents during the survey, 280 (86%) were found valid for analysis. In this case, 47 (14%) questionnaires constituted the non-response. This then implies that an excellent response rate was achieved considering the more than 30% threshold suggested by Sekaran (2003). In other words, 14% non-response rate would not necessarily interfere with the representativeness of the sample of results. With this, it necessary to check missing values of dataset which is fundamental first-step to accurate data analysis.

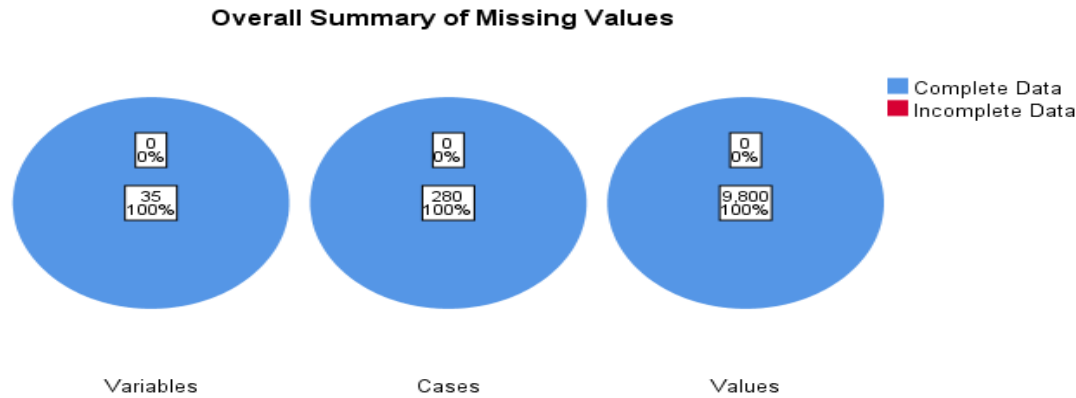


Figure 2: Missing Values Results

Figure 2 demonstrates that the questionnaire consisted of 35 (100%) variables or questions, and 280 valid sample data cases as used for analysis. By multiplying both results ( $35 \times 280$ ), 9,800 values were obtained. Thus, the large box portion showing 100% represents complete information, while 0 (0%) portions signifies no incomplete information. This implies that all data entries into the excel sheet were complete. Having established the dataset completeness, it is important to assess the characteristics of participants in the survey.

The results of respondents' demographics portray more female staff (65.4%) participated in the survey than male (34.6%). Also, the age bracket of 31-43 partook in the survey the most at 46.1%. Furthermore, the marital status of respondents was made up of mostly (66%) married staff. Moreover, majority (60.4%) of the respondents have attended tertiary education level which cut across Certificate program, Diplomas, HND/B.Sc., and Postgraduate degrees. Likewise, the participants in the survey were slightly more of junior staff (53.6%) than senior. Though, these profiles signify some sorts of quality for the study, there is need to screen the data as well.

Among the data screening, outlier test conducted revealed workplace motivation variable had outliers at 156, 161, 185, 197, 211, 231, 255 and 279. Similarly, the organizational performance variable had outliers at 157, 158, 159, 161, 162, 163, 196, 202, 204, 205, 208, 211, 213, 214, 252, 268 and 279. Lastly, decentralization variable depicted outliers at 156, 159, 161, 202, 211, 213, 214, 235, 247, 250, 266, 279 and 280. Conversely, these outliers were treated before proceeding to normality test. In evaluating data normality, the graphical (histogram and probability to probability, P-P) method was used. The histogram satisfied a normal distribution assumption as the curve divided it at the center without lop-siding to either side. Also, the P-P Plot on the regression residual also confirmed and satisfied the normality proposition because a thick line was firmly attached around a diagonal line in the diagram. As a rule of thumb, the more the thick line attaches to the diagonal line, the better is the data normality. At this point, it is equally fundamental to check for multi-collinearity between the independent variables. The results depict the absence of multi-collinearity since the Tolerance (0.978) and Variance Inflation Factor (1.023) values are within the threshold of greater than 0.10 and less than 4 respectively. In this case, their correlation values are expected to be high or moderate (as perfectly high correlation between independent variables is a symptom of multi-collinearity problem). Thus, the correlation between decentralization and organizational performance is 0.333<sup>\*\*</sup>, between

decentralization and workplace motivation is 0.149<sup>\*\*</sup>, and workplace motivation and organizational performance is 0.159<sup>\*\*</sup>. These statistics show that the relationships among the variables are all positives, linear and within low and moderate effects. Therefore, it is necessary to evaluate model fit with data.

The model fit reveals a positive regression coefficient of  $R=0.351$  for this model, meaning that decentralization & workplace motivation are a significant ( $\text{sig. } 0.000 < 0.05$ ) predictor of organizational performance. Additionally, the regression standard error of 3.66083 indicates the minimal model error to produce reliable result. In this regard, the model fitness is equally supported with a significant (0.000) and positive F-ratio of 19.486. Very important is the R-squared statistics of 0.123, as well as its adjusted value of 0.117, meaning the model can only predict research outcome on the strength of 12.3%. It can be seen that has a low predictive power which is reflected in the test of hypotheses.

Table 1: Regression Coefficients of Direct Relationships

| Relationship            | Beta  | T     | Sig.  | Decision |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|----------|
| Ho1: OP $\leftarrow$ De | 0.333 | 5.895 | 0.000 | Rejected |
| Ho2: WP $\leftarrow$ De | 0.149 | 2.513 | 0.013 | Rejected |
| Ho3: OP $\leftarrow$ WP | 0.159 | 2.685 | 0.008 | Rejected |

Table 1 presents the statistical results for the test of hypotheses one to three, known as the direction relationships. The Ho1 results show a positive (0.333) and significant ( $\text{sig. } 0.000 < 0.05$ ) effect of decentralization on organizational performance. Thus, hypothesis one is hereby rejected because there is a significant relationship between decentralization and organizational performance in Donga LGA. This is further supported by a positive t-value of  $5.895 > 1.96$  at two-tailed test as suggested by Hair et al., (2019). Similarly, Ho2 reveals a positive (0.149) and significant ( $\text{sig. of } 0.013 < 0.05$ ) effect of decentralization on workplace motivation. Therefore, hypothesis two is rejected because there is a significant relationship between decentralization and workplace motivation in Donga LGA of Taraba State. Also, this decision is supported by a positive t-value of  $2.513 > 1.96$  at two-tailed test. Furthermore, Ho3 indicates a positive (0.159) and significant ( $\text{sig. of } 0.008 < 0.05$ ) effect of workplace motivation on organizational performance. The outcome led to rejection of hypothesis three because there is a significant relationship between workplace motivation and organizational performance in Donga LGA. This is equally supported by a positive t-value of  $2.685 > 1.96$  at two-tailed test. With these outcomes, mediation is possible, and it is assessed as follows.

The process for test of mediation according to Baron & Kenny's (1986) four step approaches has been satisfied in table 1. Step 1 entails that a simple regression analysis result between the IV (De) and DV (OP) should be significant. Step 2 requires that the result of a simple regression analysis between IV (De) and mediating variable-MV (WP) be significant. Also, step 3 entails the result of a simple regression analysis between MV (WP) and DV (OP) should be significant as well. An assessment the results of table 1 suggests that steps 1-3 are all significant, and thus,

indicating the possibility of mediation effect in the relationship. Hence, there is need to perform step 4 using multiple regressions analysis to establish the indirect paths.

Table 2: Regression Results of Indirect Relationships

| Model                   | Beta  | T     | Sig.  | Decision        |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Constant                |       | 7.587 | 0.000 |                 |
| Ho4: OP $\leftarrow$ De | 0.317 | 5.566 | 0.000 | Significant     |
| OP $\leftarrow$ WP      | 0.112 | 1.965 | 0.050 | Not Significant |

Some researchers usually conclude that mediation is not possible or likely in the case where any of steps 1-3 failed to be significant, although this may not always be true (MacKinnon et al., 2012). However, in the step 4, some forms of mediation are supported because the effect of OP  $\leftarrow$  De decreased from 0.333 in table 1 to 0.317 after controlling for WP in table 2. Besides, further mediation test can be performed for more substantiation, especially in the case of any discrepancies between two approaches aforementioned. Scholars suggested using the Sobel or PROCESS statistics for bootstrapping effect to confirm mediation result (Hayes, 2013). This confirmatory test is performed using the PROCESS procedure (see table 2).

Table 3: Indirect effect of De on OP using PROCESS

| Indirect Relationship | Effect Size | Std Error | LLCI   | ULCI   | P-Value | Decision    |
|-----------------------|-------------|-----------|--------|--------|---------|-------------|
| WP                    | 0.0160      | 0.0102    | 0.0001 | 0.0395 | 0.000   | Significant |

Table 3 demonstrates that the regression coefficient for the indirect has a positive effect size of 0.0160, which represents the change in organizational performance for every unit change in decentralization as mediated by workplace motivation. Furthermore, in assessing the bootstrapping results, the estimated effect size of 0.0160 falls within the range of lower limit confidence interval (LLCI) 0.0001 and the upper limit confidence interval (ULCI) of 0.0395. Additionally, since the 95% bootstrapping confidence interval results between the Lower Confidence Interval and Upper Confidence Interval did not include a zero in-between, suggests there is mediation (Preachers & Hayes, 2008). This process has strongly justified the presence of mediation in the relationship. Nevertheless, the type of mediation that exists is partial mediation since the direct relationship was significant and indirect is also significant (Baron & Kenny, 1986). It is therefore concluded that workplace motivation partially mediates the relationship between decentralization and organizational performance in Donga LGA.

## Discussion

The result of hypothesis one demonstrated that a positive and significant relationship exists between decentralization and organizational performance in Donga LGA. This implies that as all cadres of staff in Donga LGC are empowered to carry out administrative function, respect for division of labor and positive delegation of duties; revenue mobilization, capacity to deliver on government programs, service delivery, security, infrastructures and socio-economic objectives are bound to improve. Though, the impact of this relationship is moderately felt in the LGC as

indicated by regression weight, decentralized organizational and e-governance structure has been seen as part of the game changer. Also, studies like Alamsa et al. also found that decentralization has a significant effect on managerial performance. Besides, Away et al.'s (2021) finding conforms to current result saying that delegation of decision-making power to experts in need of knowledge, technology, product, or market, greatly improves organizational performance. In line with this, Bashir (2015) validated that the performance of firms increases respectively with decentralization. These submissions entail that decentralization does better to organizations than harm. This finding aligns with the systems theory that as different hierarchies harmonize their operations, the outcomes are usually effectiveness of performance (Halliou, et al., 2022). Based on contextual reality in Nigeria, the level of current results indicates that decentralization is still an issue in local government or public organizations as the case may be.

Moreover, the outcome of hypothesis two established that decentralization positively influence workplace motivation of Donga LGA staff. The finding suggests that as different categories of staff are empowered to carry out certain functions, structural respect for task assignment, positive delegation of duties, and the rules guiding relationships in the local government, determine workplace motivation. This manifests in how healthy competition work settings are created for staff; how realistic staff's efforts are appreciated and rewarded; how the administrative communication strategy is anchored on a two-way channel; and the how LG administrative system inspires all cadres of staff for achievement. Other evidences of this result are seen in how LG service rule supports staff productivity in a flexible manner; how promotion in recent times inspires staff; and how the LG's minimum pay for all cadres of staff encourages work commitment. Current result implies that the impact of these components is poorly felt but is enshrined for practice as a mere name. Similar studies such as Amadu & Anyarayer (2022) conforms to current finding that the utilization of flexible communication structure improves employee motivation. Also, Han et al. (2022) documented that decentralization better increases employees' motivation. The direction of this consistency in results could imply that decentralization enables individuals to drive the process of motivation personally. This also finds fit with Herzberg's two factor theory in the sense that, out of the numerous motivation factors, not all can motivate everyone in likewise manner but depending what better motivates an individual. Specifically, this situation connects with hygiene and motivational factors which drive satisfaction or dissatisfaction for work (Herzberg, 1959).

This study also established a positive and significant relationship between workplace motivation and organizational performance in Donga LGC. The outcome suggests that as staff of Donga LGC continues to experience healthy work competition, staff appreciation and rewards, on a two-way communication channel, promotion to better minimum pay; they will intensify commitment to revenue drive, deliver on government programs, take service delivery to an enviable height, and equally pursue socio-economic objectives better. As is the case in this context, these potential landmark deliverables have not thrived highly well from workplace motivation, as reported by a very low regression weight. Among the studies that show consistency with current findings include Afif et al., (2023) who discovered that painting of Islamic bank surroundings motivates workers which in turn influence performance. Also, Ismael et al., (2022) found that motivation was related with the organizational productivity based on the influence of organizational citizenship. More so, Kurniasih et al., (2022); Widarko & Anwarodin, (2022); Hajiali et al., (2022) documented that motivation has a significant effect on performance. In line with this, Nasution & Priangkatara (2022) also discovered that work

motivation brings about performance compliance from employees. These findings together show with Herzberg's assumptions show that workplace motivation is one of the best channels to organizational performance.

The study demonstrated a partial mediation effect of workplace motivation in the relationship between decentralization and organizational performance in Donga LGC. This implies that as decentralization directly influences organizational performance, portion of the influence is conveyed by workplace motivation. Partial mediation in the context of local government also means that decentralization does not solely on workplace motivation before it can influence organizational performance, but it is needed to sustain organizational performance better. The logic is that, without workplace motivation, there can be no synergic-based outcomes. As local government decentralized their operations autonomously along cadres, the staff perceives responsibility with authority with which to achieve organizational goals. In validating this, Hussain et al., 2023; Phiri & Phiri (2022); believe that excellent organizational performance depends largely on human resource factor. This reflects the finding of Uka & Prendi (2021), that motivation is driving employees and organizations to work successfully in achieving simultaneous goals. For instance, creating autonomous work boundaries would motivate staff to own the process of organizational performance targets. In this mediation result, workplace motivation is crucial component that enhances organizations to experience the effectiveness of decentralization irrespective of the current practices of decentralization in local government councils. This is because workplace motivation creates rational decisions (Padave et al., 2021) in favor of achievement performance. As supported, workplace motivation is formed from staff's attitude in dealing with satisfactory work situations (Cabrera & Estacio, 2022; Vo et al., 2022). Given this, workplace motivation receives influence from decentralization and magnifies such to organizational performance.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Arising from the findings of this study, decentralization can promote organizational performance of local government better than it can improve workplace motivation. Also, owing that workplace motivation can influence organizational performance lowly, buttress the partial mediation effect of workplace motivation on the relationship between decentralization and organizational performance. In other words, workplace motivation is crucial in sustaining the nexus between decentralization and organizational performance. Though, the practices of these variables are inadequate in the local government, the end bears increase in the productivity level of staff and capacity of local governments to deliver on public programs. Overall, for the outcomes of this study to be significant suggest the concepts of decentralization and workplace motivation are crucial requirements to improve the organizational performance of Donga LGC. However, their low predictive effects indicate they are poorly practiced in reality.

As a result of these findings, the following points are suggested for stakeholders of local government councils to implement for the realization of positive organizational performance. The authorities of Donga LGC need to improve upon the level at which decentralization is practiced, by determining revenue sharing formula according to needs of individual department, and allowing each to decide on how to use their budgetary allocations meeting goal congruence. Also, the relationship between decentralization and workplace motivation in Donga LGC needs serious intervention like empowering all cadres of staff to circumnavigate the best approach for

staff motivation within the confine of local government rules. More so, the local government authorities should make drastic effort at improving the relationship between workplace motivation and organizational performance. Given this, the LG service rule should be made to support staff productivity in a flexible manner, as well as utilizing promotion and pay rise to attract performance commitment. Lastly, workplace motivation should form a pivotal basis in designing decentralization structure of the local governments to be able to sustain its mediating influence in the linkage between decentralization and organizational performance.

It is equally worthwhile to mention the constrain of this study for being conducted in Donga LGC of Taraba State, meanwhile other local government within and outside the state may possess diverse characteristics that can affect empirical results differently. Nevertheless, the study has strengthened the concepts public service administration on positive performance outcome. Consequently, the partial mediation effect of workplace motivation can shape the theoretical frameworks of Herzberg's two-factor and systems theories. As per contribution of the study to policy, local governments can update their service rules along the model of decentralization and workplace motivation dimensions.

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