

Job Crafting as a Sustainable Tool for Improving Performance among Lecturers of Public Universities in Kano State, Nigeria

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Abstract

As the most populous state in Nigeria, whose 70% is under 30 years old, Kano has a large youthful population that signals substantial and ever-increasing demand for university education; and the academics deal with heavy academic responsibilities, increasing expectations for research visibility and collaboration, infrastructural constraints and concerns regarding academic performance. With no quick fix in sight, proactively shaping, redefining and redesigning their jobs remains a viable option for the lecturers to optimise their performance. But very little is known about this behaviour by the Kano lecturers. Thus, this paper examined the effect of job crafting behaviours on the performance of the lecturers of public universities in Kano. Responses from 349 lecturers were mainly analysed using regression analysis. Among the findings are that although all the dimensions of job crafting have positive and significant affects on employee performance. Task Crafting behaviour proved to have the highest effect on the performance of the lecturers. The paper recommends that the Management of the universities should encourage lecturers to redesign appropriate aspects of teaching, assessment, supervision and research activities to complement formal academic standards rather than conflict with them. so as to optimize the mutual gains of job crafting. Also, based on the relative low effect of Relational Crafting, the universities should promote formal mentoring, peer-learning and research-collaboration structures with emphasis on new lecturers who may need guidance on high impact researches and publications, grant applications and academic networking – for better performance and general academic excellence.

Keywords: Job Crafting, Task Crafting, Relational Crafting, Cognitive Crafting, Employee Performance

1. Introduction

Higher education, especially university education, is an indisputable means for national development. The National Policy on Education (NPE) of 2013 requires that the Nigerian university system shall provide optimum contribution to the national development by producing well trained high level manpower that will serve the nation efficiently, conduct productive researches relevant to the national development goals, provide customized community services for improvements in the socio-economic development of the nation and of course, the world at large (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC), 2013). However, a serious concern is the Nigeria's persistent low human development index (HDI) with that of 2015, 2020 and 2023 being 0.530, 0.547 and 0.560 respectively, while the world average is 0.744 points (Tella; UNDP, 2025). More worrisome is that, despite being the most populous state in Nigeria, Kano has one of the lowest HDI among the states in Nigeria (Globaldatalab.org, 2026; National Population Commission (NPC), 2021). Although this is not to blame the universities or link the issue entirely to them, the researchers hold that, being the trainers of the country's highly skilled manpower who staff and mostly head all the vital sectors that ultimately determine the national development, efforts toward resolving this key indicator of performance-related problems shall best begin from the universities that serve as the highest fountain in that regard. It can be said that a nation's development greatly depends on the performance of the universities; and many experts and key stake holders posit that a university's excellence lies in the performance of its staff, especially the academics (Hee et al., 2019, 2020; Mba, 2019; Rasheed, 2020). Therefore, this study will investigate how the university lecturers' Employee Performance can be improved.

Moreover, Kano being the most populous state in Nigeria, with a population of over 13 million as at 2016 (<https://nigeria.opendataforafrica.org/apps/atlas/Kano?compareTo=>, 2022), and over 17.5 million in 2026 (Worldpopulationreview, 2026), lecturers in Kano based educational institutions are more likely to face exhaustive tasks that if left unchecked, may negatively affect their performance. This challenge will be clearer by noting the fact that with 70% of the population being under 30 years old (National Population Commission (NPC), 2021), there are, all things being equal, over 12.25 million immediate, potential and current students of the universities and other higher institutions in Kano. Such exhaustion might be linked to the finding of Galadanci et al. (2016) that, between 1990 and 2014, lecturers from Bayero University Kano (BUK), a co-representative of the Northwest region in the study, produced only 773 studies in the Scopus indexed journals, while those of University of Ibadan (UI) published 14,197. Lecturers of Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) that shares same region with the BUK, published up to 5,209 for same period. Thus, if lecturers of a far university like UI and a closer one of same Northwest region like ABU can perform this well as against the Kano based BUK, it means there are some unfavourable peculiarities that hinder the lecturers' performance in Kano public universities that deserve to be investigated.

Beside all these, job demands keep mounting as for instance, the BUK's Academic Planning Director is reported calling up the academics to move for higher online visibility, more collaborations and publications in reputable and high index journals (Usman, 2022). At the same time public universities attend to more than 94% of Nigerian university students and the 3,299 public university lecturers in Kano attend to more than 77,000 students (Rasheed, 2020). This, coupled with the inadequate teaching and learning facilities and infrastructural deficit, there is definitely need to systematically study the Employee Performance (EP) of these lecturers for possible improvements. One of the best ways is to give the lecturers the chance to strike a balance by shaping, redefining and redesigning their jobs in line with the

contemporary best practices, especially as there is no matching quick alternative in sight, to address the highlighted challenges. This simply stresses the need for job crafting. Job crafting (JC) simply means the proactive and efficiency-oriented changes that employees make to redefine, redesign and shape their jobs (Genty et al., 2020; Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). With JC, Modern HRM Practice has advanced from the employer-focused view to an employee-oriented one, as a result of which the employees utilise proactiveness and contribute to higher level of performance to the advantage of both the employees and the organisation.

But there is paucity of studies on JC and most of the studies are of foreign contexts. These studies include: Emmywati et al. (2020), Alonso et al. (2019), Bohnlein and Baum (2020), Slemph and Vella-brodrick (2013), Khan et al. (2018), Bacaksiz et al. (2017), Baten (2015), Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), Tims et al. (2014), Zhang and Liu (2020) and Esmaeili et al. (2019). Accordingly, the calls recommend that JC studies be conducted on academics of universities (and other higher educational institutions) (Castiello-Gutiérrez et al., 2020), on the public sector (Genty et al., 2020), especially in Africa (Bohnlein & Baum, 2020; Genty et al., 2020; Melhem, 2019). All these, tally with the research issues of this study as highlighted earlier. These led to forming a model involving these important variables – JC and EP – to be tried in the quest for improved performance. Specifically, the study will use the Job Crafting Theory to investigate the effect of JC on EP among lecturers in the public universities in Kano state.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employee Performance

According to Ram (2013) employee performance is very vital in a service industry like the education sector to which universities belong. Kalay (2016) reported that experts consider employee performance as a multi-faceted concept in the literature (e.g., task performance, contextual performance, interpersonal facilitation, job dedication, etc.). From the literature, however, in line with the definition by Campbell and Wiernik (2015) presented earlier, Koopmans et al. (2012) assert that the concept of employee performance places more emphasis on employee behaviours or activities than it places on the outcomes of such behaviors or actions, and that it has been important and frequently used outcome metric for studies in management and psychology.

Contextually, from the perspective of the university lecturers' statutory duties in Nigeria, employee performance is viewed by scholars as the extent to which the university academics perform a combination of duties such as teaching, conduct or supervise researches and execute community services (Akah et al., 2022; Mbon et al., 2019; Odigwe et al., 2020; Owan et al., 2020). Similarly, according to Isah (2025) university lecturers' academic productivity is evaluated based on their teaching abilities, research skills and publications, community services, and ability to generate new knowledge in a developing field and disseminate it at conferences and research publications in order to contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

2.2 Job Crafting

Wrzesniewski and Dutton, (2001:179), define JC as “the physical and cognitive changes individuals make in the task or relational boundaries of their work”. JC refers to the proactive and efficiency-oriented changes that employees make to redefine, redesign and shape their jobs (Genty et al., 2020; Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) in terms of how

the work is personally viewed or perceived, the tasks undertaken as well as how and with whom to relate in the course of performing their jobs (Baker & Slemp, 2018; Dutton & Wrzesniewski, 2020; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; C. Zhang & Liu, 2020). According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton, (2001), there are three different types of JC: task crafting (TSC), cognitive crafting (CGC) and relational crafting (RLC).

2.2.1 Task Crafting

Task crafting (TSC) refers to adjusting or customizing the job's content by changing the scope, number, nature, and manner of execution (Singh & Rajput, 2021). The four indicators of task construction are adding, removing, emphasizing, and restructuring tasks (Meerdink, 2021). Employees' performance rises as a result of task crafting (Tims et al., 2012; Weseler & Niessen, 2016) and employee taking additional task along with the tasks assigned by their job designs, means enriching their job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). More recent empirical studies that found significant relationship between TSC and EP include Genty et al. (2020), Khan et al. (2018) and Zhang & Liu, 2020). On the other hand, Baten (2015) found an insignificant relationship. Accordingly, this study hypothesized that: **H₁**: TSC would have a significant positive effect on the EP of the lecturers.

2.2.2 Relational Crafting

Relational crafting (RLC) entails using personal judgment to choose whom to interact with at work – e.g. friendship with people with similar skills or interests (Slemp & Vella-brodrick, 2013). RLC entails using judgment while choosing whom to interact with at work (e.g., making friends with people with similar skills or interests) and such choice can even be arbitrary. According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), the changes may involve either the quality or frequency of interacting with others at work. A study by Dorji and Drakpa (2020) to examine the JC practice among the lecturers of a college in Bhutan revealed that RLC was the type of JC that participants were most likely doing out of the three types: TSC, RLC, and CGC. Zhang and Liu (2020) found RLC to have a significant effect on EP, while Baten (2015) found otherwise. Thus, this study hypothesized that: **H₂**: RLC would have a significant positive effect on the EP of the lecturers.

2.2.3 Cognitive Crafting

Cognitive crafting (CGC), involves changing how an employee sees his or her job (Slemp et al., 2020). Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) state that such changes in perception and interpretation of tasks and/or work are usually to make them more meaningful. Other names of CGC include critical thinking, reflective judgment and epistemological development (Igweni et al., 2021). Singh and Rajput (2021) posit that CGC is the easiest form of JC because altering one's perspective of the job is considerably easier than altering the tasks and interpersonal interactions of the job. While changing tasks or relationships calls for employees to alter their work behaviors and actions, changing employees' views of their work can simply improve work cognition. Empirically, among the studies that used measures/items for this dimension found CGC to have a significant effect on EP are Khan et al. (2018) and Zhang and Liu (2020), while Baten (2015) found an insignificant effect. In view of this, the present study hypothesized that: **H₃**: CGC would have a significant positive effect on the EP of the lecturers.

2.3 Theoretical Underpinning and Model of the Study

The study's underpinning theory is the Job Crafting Theory that got its foundation from the work of Wrzesniewski and Dutton(2001) and it recognises and professes the opportunities employees have to proactively craft their jobs for the mutual benefits of both the employee and the organisation (Berg et al., 2007; Holcombe, 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). The JC theory states that employees tend to modify/adjust their jobs mainly to satisfy individual needs of asserting some control over their jobs to elevate its meaning, create or maintain a positive self-image and/or attain self-fulfillment; when they perceive the existence of the opportunity for JC (Berg et al., 2007; Holcombe, 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Other EP related outcomes of JC highlighted by the JC theory are 'ability to cope with adversity at work' (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001) and "*increased competence*" (Berg et al., 2007:3). Similarly, it is held that if properly implemented, JC would enable the employees to have improved life at work and "*make valuable contributions to the workplace*" (Berg et al., 2007:8). This means the theory proposes a positive relationship between JC and EP. Below is the Conceptual Model of the study:

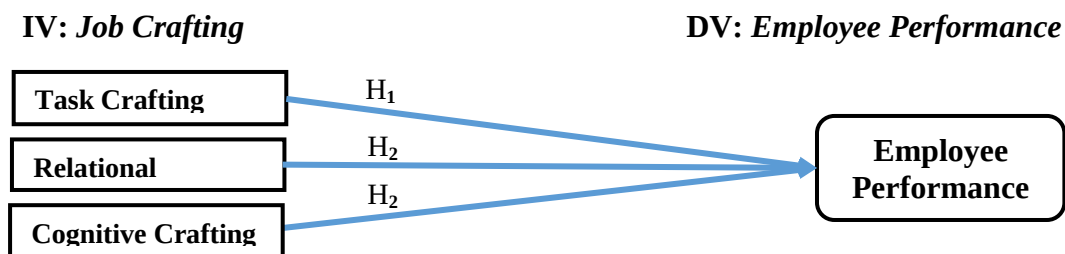


Figure 1: Conceptual Model of the Study

Source: The Researchers' Design (2025)

The **mathematical representation** of the multiple linear regression model is as follows:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{i1} + \dots + \beta_n X_{in} + e_i \quad \text{Where:}$$

Y_i = Employee Performance

β_0 = The Origin

β_i = The coefficient of a given dimension of JC (Beta value)

X_1 = TSC, X_2 = RLC, X_3 = CGC and

e_i = **Error Term.**

Therefore, the actual regression equation for the study would be:

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{TSC} + \beta_2 \text{RLC} + \beta_3 \text{CGC} + e_i$$

3. Methodology

The research design for the study is a cross-sectional, survey research. To ensure using stable staff data, the population of the study consists of three thousand two hundred and ninety-nine (3,299) lecturers in the four (4) public universities established before the year 2020 in Kano state. These are Bayero University, Kano (BUK), N=1,817, n=286; Northwest University (NWU), N=721, n=113; Aliko Dangote University of Science & Technology (ADUST), N=538, n=85 and Police Academy, Wudil (POLAC), N=223, n=35.

Stratified proportional sampling technique was used to select the sample size after first getting the sampling frames the relevant universities; this is because it gives each and every member of the population an equal chance of being included the sample (Kothari,

2004).Based on the stated population size of 3,299 as rounded to 3,500, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size determination was used to determine a sample size of 346 which was increased by 50 percent (Salkind, 2010), thus becoming 519 lecturers as samples. A five (5) Likert scale questionnaire was used on the adapted EP scale developed by Koopmans et al. (2014), the DV; and for JC (the IV), the JC scale by Slemple and Vella-brodrick (2013) was used. Five research assistants were employed to support data collection. Multiple regression analysis and supporting descriptives using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software (version 22.0) were employed in analyzing the data.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Preliminary Analysis

The 349 responses (representing 67.24%) out of the 519 distributed questionnaires (were edited and 7 missing values(0.06%) out of 11,517 core expected entries were replaced using Person Mean Substitution (PMS) method (Downey & King, 1998).Moreover, 6 univariate outliers (IDs:14, 19, 47, 48, 63, and 196) were removed for a Z-score outside the range of -3.29 and +3.29(0.001 sig. level), while Mahalanobis distance led to removal of two multivariate outliers (IDs: 115 and 116),leaving a total of 341 responses/cases for further analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, 2014).

4.2 Reliability and Assumptions of Multivariate (Regression) Analysis

The long-standing content validity of the instruments (Koopmans et al., 2014; Slemple & Vella-brodrick, 2013) and the face validation of the adapted versions by six PhD holders, two of whom are professors of human resource management, face validity is achieved as further confirmed by the acceptable reliability result of this study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The Cronbach's alpha (α) values of the reliability test for EP, TSC, RLC and CGC are 0.817, 0.650, 0.639 and 0.775 respectively; which range from acceptable to good reliability (Sekaran, 2003; Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). But upon removing the two multivariate outliers, the initial Cronbach's α -value of RLC fell from 0.630 to 0.594. Investigation revealed that RLC3 had a low corrected item-total correlation ($r = 0.184$) and most promising increase in Cronbach's α -value to 0.639 if it is deleted. Further examinations flagged the illustrative example in the RLC3 ("e.g. celebrating co-worker's birthday")as contextual constraint vis-à-vis the sociocultural and workplace contexts of the study's population/unit of analysis, and thus considered potentially less familiar or less relevant to the respondents which might have influenced the response pattern of the item. Hence, the RLC3 was excluded from the present study's analysis, leaving four items, due to evidence of weak item-total correlation and likely mean relevance to the respondents.

With regard to **normality**, as most of the observations clustered around the mean and under the curve, and that both kurtosis and skewness were closer to zero, normality of the data is achieved (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). **Linearity** assumption was not violated as the residual scatter plot shows that residual scores converged at the center along the zero point (Pallant, 2003; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). **Multicollinearity** is also not found as the correlations among the independent variables revealed by correlation matrix range between 0.261 and 0.411, which are far below the thresholds of ≥ 0.70 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013) and ≥ 0.90 ; just as no variance inflation factor (VIF) exceeds 10 or tolerance value lower than 0.10 (Hair et al., 2010). **Homoscedasticity**, the assumption that the variance of the dependent variable is approximately the same at different level of the independent variables is achieved as scatter plots show a pattern of residuals normally disseminated around the mean (Berrey &

Feildman, 1985) and that the variances along the line of best fit remain similar as you move along the line (LundResearchLtd, 2013).

4.3 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The respondents' profile shows that 77.7% are male, 57.8% are between 36–50 years old, 30.5% spent 6–11 years in the present job, 52.8% are PhD holders, 20.5% and 7.6% are Assistant Lecturers and Professors respectively, 98.2% are married and 53.4% of the respondents work with the Bayero University, Kano.

4.5 Regression Analysis Results

Multiple regression analysis is a statistical technique of examining the simultaneous effects of several independent variables on a dependent variable that is at least measured at interval level (Sekaran, 2003). Therefore, to examine how sustainable is job crafting in improving the performance among lecturers of public universities in Kano State, the effect of job crafting on employee performance of the lecturers was assessed using multiple regression analysis. Three (3) dimensions of the predicting variable, namely: TSC, RLC and CGC were examined to see their contributions on EP. The tables below present the regression analysis results:

Table 4.1
Model Summary

Model Summary ^b							
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted		Change Statistics		
			R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F Change	Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.486 ^a	.236	.229	.37918	34.658	.000	1.787

a. Predictors: (Constant), CGC, TSC, RLC

b. Dependent Variable: EP

Source: Data Analysis – SPSS Output, 2026

Table 4.1 above indicates the power of the model in explaining the DV, EP, as mainly represented by the R Square ($R^2 = 0.236$), showing that IVs (TSC, RLC and CGC) have explained 23.6% of the variance EP Cohen and Cohen (1983) and Cohen (1988) categorize the R^2 into three (3) categories: 0.02 as weak, 0.13 as moderate and 0.26 as substantial. Therefore, the present study's R^2 is considered moderate (and very close to substantial).

Table 4.2
Model Fit ANOVA Result

ANOVA ^a					
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
1	Regression	14.949	3	4.983	34.658
	Residual	48.453	337	.144	
	Total	63.402	340		

a. Dependent Variable: EP

b. Predictors: (Constant), CGC, TSC, RLC

Source: Data Analysis – SPSS Output, 2026

Table 4.2, the ANOVA table reveals that there is overall model fit. The values, $F(3;337) = 34.658$, $P = 0.000$, suggest a good prediction of the DV by the explanatory variables (TSC, RLC and CGC) at a significant level. Thus, the model is fit for the present study.

Table 4.3

Coefficients ^a										
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.	Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1(Constant)	2.094	.155		13.504	.000					
TSC	.204	.036	.291	5.719	.000	.392	.297	.272	.875	1.142
RLC	.087	.038	.124	2.293	.022	.313	.124	.109	.780	1.282
CGC	.146	.033	.232	4.387	.000	.358	.232	.209	.813	1.230

Regression Coefficients

a. Dependent Variable: EP

Source: Data Analysis – SPSS Output, 2026

According to Kumar et al. (2013), a t-value above 1.645, indicates a significant relationship between the IV and the DV. The other threshold is the probability criteria of p-value being < 0.05 (Pallant, 2003; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2014). Based on these, TSC ($\beta = 0.204$, $t = 5.719$, $p < 0.000$), RLC ($\beta = 0.087$, $t = 2.293$, $p = 0.022$), CGC ($\beta = 0.146$, $t = 4.387$, $p < 0.000$), have positive significant effect on EP. The linear regression function based on the study's actual (unstandardized coefficients) values, would be Numerically the relationship would be:

$$EP = 2.094 + 0.204TSC + 0.087RLC + 0.146CGC + ei.$$

4.6 Discussion of Results

The main objective of this paper is to determine how sustainable would JC be in improving the performance of lecturers of public universities in Kano state, Nigeria, by statistically examining the effect of the three dimensions of JC, viz: TSC, RLC and CGC on EP of the said lecturers; with a view to determining how the dimensions interact with EP and get a hint how they can be managed to sustainably boost the performance of the lecturers.

The analysis results show that TCS has a positive significant effect on the EP of the lecturers. Thus, H_1 is supported. This finding is in line with those of Genty et al. (2020), Khan et al. (2018) and Zhang & Liu (2020) and differs with that of Baten (2015). Having both the beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.204$) and standardized beta ($\beta = 0.291$) as the highest suggests that, changing and improving the way academic tasks are performed represents the most influential JC pathway to higher lecturers performance in Kano based universities.

For the second, the effect of RLC on EP is also found to be positive and significant. H_2 is therefore supported. This tallies with Zhang and Liu (2020) differs with Baten (2015). In spite of RLC's smallest coefficient among the three dimensions, its statistical significance demonstrates that it nevertheless makes a meaningful independent contribution to the lecturers' performance as those who proactively modify, strengthen or develop their work-related relationships tend to report better EP.

Next is the finding that CGC also has a positive significant effect on the EP of the lecturers. Accordingly, H_3 is supported. Similar findings are Khan et al. (2018) and Zhang and Liu (2020), while Baten (2015) found an insignificant effect. It is the second potent dimension that predicts the lecturers' EP. For lecturers, this may involve viewing teaching as not merely an employment obligation but as a contribution to human-capital development; practically considering research not simply as a requirement for promotion but as knowledge creation capable of addressing societal problems. It may also involve taking students supervision as an investment in the next generation of professionals and researchers. Thus, lecturers with CGC tend to consider teaching as a calling and may be more likely to endure the contextual challenges. Likewise, lecturers who perceive teaching as preparation of the human resources that will eventually run the nation's key institutions and sectors may be more inclined to seek and utilize more innovative approaches to teaching and learning.

5. Conclusion

In line with the Job Crafting Theory's postulation of JC-EP relationship, this study establishes that all the three proxies of JC (TSC, RLC and CGC) have positive and significant effect on the EP of the lecturers of public universities in Kano state, Nigeria. This means that these proxies can be managed to improve the lecturers' performance. Although TSC proves to be the strongest predictor of the lecturers' performance (EP), followed by CGC, then RLC, the observed statistical pattern however, provides empirical evidence for both conceptualising and applying JC as a multidimensional strategy for sustainable lecturers' performance that can match the large, youthful and increasing student population of Kano, and the limited available facilities. But JC as a sustainable tool does not mean that employees should solely be responsible for solving all organisational/university's problems themselves. Rather, sustainability will set in when those proactive behaviours of the lecturer are supported by enabling infrastructural, administrative and general conditions of the universities/institutions.

One vital essence of JC is offering an additional approach to solving problem because it focuses on what employees, like the lecturers, can do pragmatically within the existing work environment while broader, slower reforms, continue at both state and or national levels. Given the contextual background of this study, it is important to note the possible wider policy implication of JC. That is, as JC improves lecturers' performance (EP), both teaching, research, supervision and community service delivery improve. This means or leads to stronger university performance which further leads to better human capital development that by extension translates into higher national development.

6. Recommendations

The present study recommends as follows:

1. Since TSC has the strongest effect on EP, universities Management should prioritise it and make task crafting a central component of some workshops and similar training sessions. The Management should also encourage lecturers to redesign appropriate aspects of teaching, assessment, supervision and research activities for improved efficiency and academic excellence.
2. Given the relative low effect of RLC, the universities should promote formal mentoring, peer-learning and research-collaboration structures with emphasis to new lecturers who may need guidance on high impact researches and publications, grant applications and academic networking.
3. The universities should initiate cognitive crafting development programmes to help lecturers reflect on the broader significance of teaching, research, supervision and

community service and identify their academic work with graduate development, societal needs and national development.

4. As the regulator, the National University Commission (NUC), shall encourage universities to develop policies that support responsible lecturers' autonomy and atmosphere that allow JC to complement formal academic standards rather than conflict with them so as to optimize the mutual gains of JC.

7. Limitations and Further Studies

The present study focused on universities, that are public, and those established before the year 2020, in Kano state of Nigeria; thereby leaving out many other tertiary institutions and sectors within and outside the state. The model is also limited to only IV(s) and DV. Future studies can therefore consider Polytechnics and other tertiary institutions, as well as private institutions/universities. The model shall also be expanded to include other vital variables that could manifest in, contribute or further explain the interplay between the variables in the model of the present study. Similar studies shall also be replicated in other various industries and sectors. Comparative studies would also help in further enriching the literature.

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