

TRUST AND EMPLOYEES' CREATIVITY IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT-OWNED UNIVERSITIES IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA

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Abstract:

This research investigates the relationship between trust and employee creativity. The study involved 354 randomly selected academic staff members, including both teaching and non-teaching personnel, from five Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Utilising a quasi-experimental research design, data were collected through a cross-sectional survey. Analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient in SPSS Version 25. The results re-vealed a positive and significant correlation between trust and employee creativity in Nigerian universities. Specifically, all dimensions of trust—competence-based, openness-based, reliability-based, and consistency-based—positively and significantly influenced various aspects of employee creativity, including expertise, creative thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation. Based on these findings, the study concludes that trust facilitates employee creativity in Nigerian universities, with competence-based, openness-based, reliability-based, and consistency-based trust playing crucial roles in enhancing expertise, creative thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation. Consequently, it is recommended that the management of Nigerian universities prioritise and cultivate trust within the work environment to foster employee creativity, thereby promoting expertise, creative thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation. Additionally, the study discusses the theoretical and practical implications for enhancing trust and employee creativity within the Nigerian university system.

Keyword:

Employees' Creativity,
Niger Delta Region,
Nigeria, Nigerian
Universities, Trust.

Introduction

The contemporary discourse on employee creativity within organizational contexts presents a complex challenge. As organizations navigate the intricacies of an evolving global landscape, they increasingly recognize the necessity of innovation and enhanced operational efficiency (Han et al., 1998; Im and Workman, 2004). Employee creativity, a key driver of innovation, is essential for organizational growth and sustainability (Han et al., 1998; Im and Workman, 2004). This understanding underscores the strategic importance of cultivating a creative culture within the workforce, which is vital for gaining competitive advantages (Shalley et al., 2004).

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In saturated markets characterized by escalating competition, organizations must foster innovative solutions to business challenges (Shalley et al., 2004). By leveraging existing employees' creative potential or attracting new talent, organizations aim to enhance creativity, thereby improving their market appeal and operational effectiveness (Amabile, 1988; Staw, 1990; Woodman et al., 1993).

In light of this evolving landscape, organisations prioritise developing employee creativity alongside technical skills (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). By recognizing the intrinsic value of their employees—particularly frontline service staff- organisations strive to utilize creativity to improve customer experiences and overall performance (Coelho et al., 2011). This endeavour necessitates a nuanced understanding of the organizational and personal attributes that foster creativity, enabling managers to refine their strategies for recruitment, training, and work environments (Coelho et al., 2011). Such initiatives are relevant across various organisational domains, from production to research and development, highlighting the broad impact of creativity on organisational vitality and growth, particularly in educational contexts such as Nigerian universities (Coelho et al., 2011).

The preceding discussion clearly illustrates that numerous studies have investigated the concepts of trust and creativity. This increase in scholarly activity within the organisational framework signifies a substantial advancement in the sociology of knowledge. However, despite the acknowledged importance of creativity, the mechanisms that drive it remain elusive. While research has examined the connection between effect and creativity, comprehensive insights into the conditions that promote creative performance are still limited (Amabile et al., 2005). Additionally, trust is a crucial factor in organisational dynamics, significantly influencing employee engagement and commitment (Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997; Bayansalduz et al., 2017). However, building and sustaining trust within organisations is complex, necessitating trustworthy behaviour and consistent, behaviour-driven efforts from leadership (Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997; Bayansalduz et al., 2017). Empirical studies indicate a positive correlation between trust and creativity, underscoring its essential role in facilitating desirable organisational outcomes (Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997; Monji & Ortlepp, 2011). However, these studies were primarily conducted in Western contexts, raising questions regarding the generalizability of their findings to an African context, such as Nigeria.

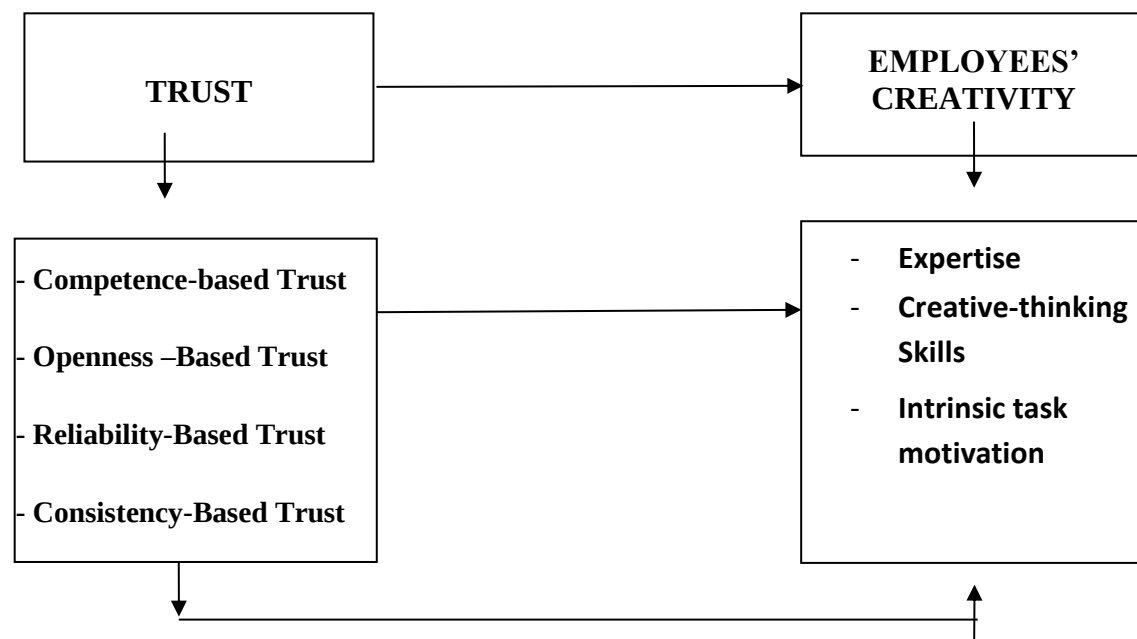
The synthesis of existing literature highlights the need for thorough examinations of the personal and organisational factors that shape creativity and trust within Nigerian contexts. While current studies offer insights into the personal dimensions of creativity, research on its manifestations in organisational settings is lacking. Similarly, despite the recognised significance of trust, empirical investigations into its implications for creativity, especially within Nigerian workplaces, are limited. Addressing these gaps in the management literature could enhance scholarly understanding and inform managerial practices, providing tailored insights into fostering creativity and trust within Nigerian universities and beyond.

This study seeks to address existing gaps in the management and organisational behaviour literature by investigating the relationship between trust and employee creativity within

Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. The primary research question guiding this inquiry is: What is the relationship between trust and employee creativity in these universities?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the study is presented in Figure 1 below.



Source: Conceptualized by the Researcher

Figure 1: The framework utilized for examining the correlation between trust and employees' creativity within Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria

Trust, serving as the independent variable, is delineated based on dimensions identified in the research of Nwibere and Olu-Daniel (2014). These dimensions encompass competence-based trust, openness-based trust, reliability-based trust, and consistency-based trust. Conversely, the dependent variable is employees' creativity, for which the metrics are drawn from the earlier work of Amabile (1996; 1997). The indicators of employees' creativity encompass expertise or domain-relevant skills and knowledge, creative thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 THE CONCEPT OF TRUST

Trust is a critical element in organisational dynamics. Mullins (2005) asserts that the contemporary landscape of global competition and rapid change makes traditional employment guarantees impractical, necessitating a shift towards management practices centred on trust and teamwork. Fukuyama (1995) corroborates this perspective by

highlighting the significance of trust in forming alliances and networks that are essential for organisational viability. Similarly, Brownell (2000) contends that trust serves as the foundation of organisational credibility, stressing that organizations must actively cultivate trust with their employees to thrive in today's dynamic environment. Additionally, comprehending the relationship between trust and employee commitment to supervisors is vital for enhancing organisational trustworthiness.

In the realm of social sciences, numerous definitions of trust have been proposed. Mayer et al. (1995) define trust as the willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the expectation of reciprocal actions. Perks and Halliday (2003) describe it as an expectation of mutual benefit or, at a minimum, non-exploitation. These definitions converge on the essence of trust: an expectation of benevolent action combined with vulnerability and reliance on the integrity and behaviour of the other party (Shockley-Zabalak et al., 2011). Moreover, trust is conceptualised as a learned psychological state that is deeply intertwined with social interactions within institutions and organisations, thereby influencing individuals' perceptions and behaviours in organisational contexts (Rotter, 1971; Luhmann, 1973; Erickson, 1968).

Dimensions of Trust

Despite a growing consensus on the definition of trust, its operationalisation within organisational and management literature needs to be more cohesive and extensive, as McEvily and Tortoriello noted (2011). They highlight the lack of agreement on trust measurement methodologies, with various measures identified across studies. This disparity underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to assess and cultivate organisational trust. The Organisational Trust Index offers a framework for evaluating trust levels, identifying cultural orientations, and guiding the development of trust-based organisational cultures. Furthermore, organisational trust—encompassing trust in supervisors and internal organisational trust—emerges as critical for effective leadership and organisational cohesion, emphasising the necessity for managers to foster trust through transparent communication, integrity, and consistent behaviour (Gilbert & Tang, 1998; Bagraim, 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Competence-based trust: Competence-based trust is defined as the expectation that a partner possesses the necessary technical expertise, practical experience, and reliability to fulfil commitments (Lui & Ngo, 2004). This type of trust develops from consistent and dependable performance over time within a relationship (Lee, 2004; Whipple & Frankel, 2000). It pertains to an individual's skills and capabilities in a specific domain, instilling confidence in their ability to perform related tasks effectively. In this context, Company A cultivates high levels of competence-based trust, while Company B falls short.

Openness-Based Trust: Openness-based trust is fundamental to organisational dynamics. It operates at multiple levels: from employees collaborating through mutual trust to managers fostering a growth mindset by earning their teams' trust, and leaders empowering

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their workforce through trust. Openness, characterized by the widespread sharing of information among colleagues, is essential and constitutes a significant portion—65 percent—of organisational trust (Schein, 2010). This form of trust relies on the transparent exchange of task-relevant information (McLeod & MacDonell, 2011), facilitating goal alignment and fostering a shared understanding among team members (Dyer & Chu, 2003; Bstieler, 2006; Zidane et al., 2016). Additionally, it mitigates mistrust and conflicts of interest, thereby enhancing project performance (Turner & Müller, 2004). Open communication and transparency are imperative to cultivate a positive and ethical work environment. These elements foster a culture of trust where employees feel valued, respected, and empowered to articulate their opinions and concerns. Such components are essential for establishing and maintaining trust within an organisation, as they ensure that employees remain informed and engaged in the decision-making processes. Transparent communication not only assists employees in understanding the company's goals, values, and expectations but also enables leaders to convey information, provide feedback, and address concerns effectively. By consistently practising transparency, leaders can enhance their credibility and become trusted sources of information.

Integrity-Based Trust: Integrity-based trust emerges from perceptions regarding a partner's intentions, truthfulness, and moral standing (Sitkin & Roth, 1993). This concept underscores the social and attitudinal dimensions of relationships (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, 1995). Integrity is defined as "the consistency of the individual's past actions, credible testimonials about the trustee from third parties, belief in the trustee's strong sense of justice, and the alignment of the trustee's actions with their words" (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 719). Company B exhibits significant levels of integrity-based trust, whereas Company A does not.

Reliability-Based Trust: Reliability-based trust centres on the consistent ability to fulfil promises, commitments, and responsibilities. It reflects the firm belief that others hold in an individual based on their actions, words, and presence. Reliability is cultivated through past interactions or experiences; over time, repeated engagement fosters confidence, consistency, and, ultimately, trust. To be considered reliable entails demonstrating dependability, consistency, and accountability in all areas of life. This concept transcends mere punctuality and adherence to deadlines, encompassing a broader understanding of reliability as a core character trait (Andrade et al. 2020; Tworek et al., 2020; Benson and Ribbers, 2020; Fei, 2020)

Reliable individuals are present when needed, honour their commitments, and provide stability and reassurance, thereby creating an environment conducive to healthy interpersonal relationships. In personal contexts, reliability nurtures feelings of security and emotional well-being. The knowledge that one can rely on another for support or assistance evokes a sense of comfort and confidence. In professional settings, reliability is highly regarded. Trusted employees complete tasks efficiently and effectively, showcasing a robust work ethic. They consistently meet deadlines, communicate clearly, and take

responsibility for their duties (Mokkink et al.2020; Rose & Johnson, 2020; Minozzi et al.2020)

Consistency-Based Trust: Trust is fundamental for fostering collaboration, engagement, and performance within teams, and it fundamentally relies on consistent leadership behaviours and styles. Nonetheless, some leaders exhibit inconsistencies that can disrupt team dynamics. These inconsistencies may manifest as frequent alterations in goals and priorities, unpredictable mood fluctuations, mixed signals and feedback, or the preferential treatment of certain team members. Trust can be assessed through instruments such as the Organisational Trust Index or the Organisational Trust Inventory scale. The Organisational Trust Index, as articulated by Bodnarczuk (2008), encompasses six dimensions: Truth, Integrity, Power, Competency, Values, and Recognition. It is crucial to recognize that trust is a multidimensional construct involving interpersonal trust (Gomez and Rosen, 2001; Omodei and McLennan, 2000; Schindler and Thomas, 1993), dyadic trust (Gurtman, 1992; Larzelere and Huston, 1980), and organisational trust (Shockley-Zalabak et al., 2011; Nyhan and Marlowe, 1997). For the purposes of this study, the Organisational Trust Inventory developed by Nyhan and Marlowe (1997) was used as a measurement tool, facilitating the evaluation of two dimensions of trust: interpersonal trust and organisational/system trust.

2.2 EMPLOYEES' CREATIVITY

Employee creativity refers to the generation of innovative ideas related to practices, products, or services that are both novel and potentially beneficial to an organization (Oldham and Cummings, 1996; Shalley et al., 2004). It encompasses various aspects of organizational improvement, such as developing innovative solutions to business challenges, implementing strategic changes in processes, or making inventive modifications to job routines (Amabile, 1996; Shalley, 1991; Zhou, 1998a). This definition highlights the significance of both originality and practicality in creative ideation. While creativity primarily operates at the individual level, organizational innovation involves the broader implementation of these ideas, positioning creativity as the initial phase of the innovation process (Shalley et al., 2004; West and Farr, 1990).

Research has extensively examined the antecedents of employee creativity, focusing on two key areas: personal drivers and contextual factors (Shalley et al., 2004). Personal drivers consider the influence of individual traits, such as personality and cognitive style, whereas contextual factors encompass elements of the work environment external to the individual that impact creativity (Shalley et al., 2004). Studies have identified several contextual factors influencing creativity, including job characteristics, employee relationships, and supervisory interactions (Amabile et al., 1996; Tierney and Farmer, 2004). Understanding these factors is vital for fostering an environment that promotes employee creativity.

Creativity is a multifaceted construct involving interactions among individuals, processes, products, and the environment (Runco, 2004). It necessitates the generation of novel and

relevant ideas that address specific situational needs (Woodman et al., 1993). However, creativity is distinct from organisational innovation, which involves the successful execution of creative ideas by the organisation (Zhou and George, 2001). Consequently, effectively managing creativity is essential for organisations to maintain a sustainable competitive edge (Dell’Era et al., 2011). This includes integrating knowledge across diverse settings and promoting a supportive work environment conducive to creativity and innovation (Handzic and Chaimungkalanont, 2004; Politis, 2004). The Componential Theory of Creativity, developed by Amabile (1997), challenges the notion that creativity is inherent only to certain individuals. Instead, it posits that everyone has the potential for creativity, significantly influenced by their social environment (Amabile, 1997). This theory identifies three key components essential for individual creativity: expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation (Amabile, 1997). These components interact to shape the level and frequency of creative output, highlighting the importance of both individual abilities and environmental influences in nurturing creativity.

Another perspective, the interactionist model, emphasises the collaborative nature of creativity, suggesting that individual, group, and organisational characteristics together impact creative performance (Woodman et al., 1993). This model stresses the interaction between personal traits and the work environment in determining creative outcomes. Factors such as domain-relevant skills, intrinsic motivation, and creativity-relevant processes are vital in either enhancing or inhibiting creative performance (Amabile, 1988; Sawyer, 1992). Understanding these dynamics is crucial for organisations seeking to foster a culture of innovation and creativity among their employees.

Employees’ Expertise: Expertise is a pivotal factor that significantly affects creativity in organisations. As defined by Amabile (1988), expertise encompasses the depth of knowledge, skills, and experience individuals have in a specific domain. Research by George and Zhou (2002) shows that employees with high levels of expertise are more likely to generate creative ideas and solutions due to their comprehensive understanding and mastery of relevant knowledge and techniques. Additionally, Zhang and Bartol (2010) highlight that expertise allows employees to recognise patterns, identify opportunities, and creatively overcome challenges, resulting in innovative outcomes. Thus, cultivating and leveraging employee expertise is essential for promoting creativity and innovation in organisations.

Moreover, studies have shown that factors such as task complexity and autonomy affect the relationship between employee expertise and creativity. For instance, Gong et al. (2009) found that in tasks requiring high levels of complexity, employee expertise positively influences creativity, particularly when paired with high levels of autonomy. Additionally, Oldham and Cummings (1996) suggest that granting employees autonomy encourages them to apply their expertise creatively, leading to novel ideas and solutions. Therefore, organisations must design tasks and offer autonomy in ways that enable employees to effectively utilize their expertise to enhance creativity.

Furthermore, research indicates that continuous learning and development opportunities are essential for maintaining and expanding employee expertise, thereby increasing creativity over time. Eisenberger and Shanock (2003) emphasize the need for organizations to invest in training programs, knowledge-sharing initiatives, and mentorship to nurture employee expertise. Additionally, Amabile et al. (1996) suggest that creating a supportive work environment that values and rewards expertise motivates employees to continuously improve their skills and knowledge, fostering a culture of innovation. Thus, organizations should prioritize strategies that facilitate ongoing learning and skill development to cultivate employee expertise and drive creativity.

Employee creative thinking skills: Employee creative thinking skills also play a crucial role in enhancing overall organisational creativity. Creative thinking involves the ability to generate unique ideas, explore alternative perspectives, and approach problems in unconventional ways (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). According to Amabile (1996), creative thinking encompasses both divergent and convergent thought processes, enabling individuals to generate a wide array of ideas and select the most promising ones for further development. Research by Mumford et al. (2002) highlights that employees with strong creative thinking skills are better equipped to tackle complex challenges and adapt to dynamic environments, ultimately driving innovation within their organizations.

Moreover, studies show that specific factors influence employee creative thinking and contribute to overall creativity. For instance, organizational climate and leadership style play significant roles in either promoting or inhibiting creative thinking. Shalley and Gilson (2004) highlight the importance of a supportive work environment that encourages risk-taking, experimentation, and open communication, all of which foster employee creativity. Additionally, transformational leadership—characterized by vision, inspiration, and intellectual stimulation—has been linked to enhanced creative thinking among employees (Zhou & George, 2001). Therefore, organizations must cultivate a culture and leadership approach that nurtures and harnesses employee creative thinking to drive innovation and maintain a competitive edge.

Furthermore, fostering employee creative thinking requires providing resources, opportunities, and incentives that stimulate and sustain creative thought processes. Amabile et al. (1996) underline the significance of autonomy, time for reflection, and access to diverse information and resources in facilitating creative thinking. Additionally, organizational structures and processes should promote collaboration, idea cross-pollination, and experimentation (Paulus & Nijstad, 2003). By creating a conducive environment and offering necessary support, organizations can empower employees to effectively leverage their creative abilities, ultimately enhancing overall creativity and innovation.

Intrinsic task motivation: Intrinsic task motivation significantly influences creativity within organizations. This motivation refers to the internal drive and enjoyment individuals experience when engaging in tasks for their inherent satisfaction and interest (Deci & Ryan,

1985). Research by Amabile (1996) suggests that employees who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to exhibit creative behaviours and generate innovative ideas. Such motivation fosters a sense of autonomy, mastery, and purpose, which are essential for stimulating creative thinking and problem-solving abilities among employees.

Moreover, studies have emphasized the role of intrinsic task motivation in exploring new ideas and approaches. Deci and Ryan (1985) argue that intrinsically motivated individuals are more inclined to engage in exploratory behavior, seek challenges, and persist despite obstacles—conditions that are conducive to creative idea generation. Additionally, Amabile et al. (1996) emphasize that intrinsic motivation enhances individuals' willingness to take risks and experiment with unconventional solutions, leading to the discovery of innovative approaches to tasks and problems. Therefore, organizations must foster an environment that nurtures intrinsic task motivation among employees to promote creativity and innovation.

Intrinsic task motivation is closely connected to factors like job autonomy, meaningfulness, and opportunities for skill development. Research by Eisenberger and Shanock (2003) indicates that granting employees autonomy and avenues for personal growth can boost intrinsic motivation, ultimately enhancing creativity. Additionally, fostering a sense of purpose and alignment with organizational goals can further strengthen intrinsic motivation and creative engagement among employees (Grant, 2008). Therefore, organizations should design jobs and work environments that provide employees with autonomy, opportunities for skill mastery, and a sense of purpose to cultivate intrinsic task motivation and stimulate creativity.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Smith et al. (2017) examined the relationship between Trust and Employee Expertise Using a sample of 300 employees from selected banks in Nigeria and found a significant positive relationship between all trust dimensions—openness, competence, reliability, and consistency—and employee expertise, indicating that higher levels of trust in the workplace enhances employees' expertise. In another study, Johnson and Brown (2018) explored the relationship between trust dimensions and employee creative thinking skills using a sample of 150 employees from the banking industry in Abuja, Nigeria and found a positive association between trust dimensions and employee creative thinking skills, emphasizing the importance of trust in fostering creativity among employees in the banking sector.

Vito and Mekuri-Ndimele (2020) examined the relationship between organisational trust and employee commitment using a sample of 208 employees from four selected telecommunications companies in Port Harcourt. They found a positive and significant relationship between organisational trust and employee commitment. On his part, Tambari (2020) conducted a study on the correlation between organisational justice and organisational trust in the banking industry in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, and found a significant positive association between the dimensions of organisational justice—specifically procedural justice and interactional justice—and the measures of organisational trust, particularly openness and concern for employees.

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Alomran (2024) investigated the impact of organisational trust on organisational commitment, focusing on the moderating effect of national identity using a sample of 212 employees from 20 hotel establishments in the Hail region of Saudi Arabia. The results revealed that organisational trust is a positive predictor of all types of organisational commitment (affective, continuance, and normative). On their part, Saleem et al. (2021) investigated the barriers to creative thinking and their impact on organisational performance, specifically focusing on the mediating role of employee creativity. The findings demonstrated that barriers to creative thinking do indeed affect organisational performance, mediated by employee creativity.

In a related study, Manzoor et al. (2021) explored the connection between intrinsic rewards and employee performance, with a particular emphasis on employee motivation as a mediating factor. The results demonstrated a positive and significant relationship between intrinsic rewards and employee performance, highlighting that employee motivation plays a crucial mediating role in this relationship. Singh (2021) evaluated the connection between intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, aiming to understand how internal factors drive employees to find contentment in their work. The findings revealed a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction, suggesting that intrinsic motivation contributes to enhanced job satisfaction. However, it was observed that while most participants reported being intrinsically motivated in their jobs, a majority displayed moderate satisfaction levels, indicating that additional factors may also influence job satisfaction beyond intrinsic motivation.

Establishing trust within an organization requires a collective effort from all members, as highlighted by Bodnarczuk (2008). Trust is the cornerstone of human interactions and forms the foundation for cultivating high-performance organizational cultures. Bodnarczuk points out a crucial dichotomy presented by the Organizational Trust Index developed by the Breckenridge Institute: organizations are either driven by trust or fear. Managers face a vital choice between actively fostering trust or allowing factors such as daily challenges, ineffective communication, and misperceptions to erode trust, thereby creating a culture of fear. The six perspectives of the Organizational Trust Index provide a framework for managers to assess trust levels within their organization, discern whether their culture is trust-based or fear-driven, and take steps to nurture a trust-centered environment that enhances member creativity.

While trust is typically associated with interpersonal relationships, organizational trust extends to confidence in the organization's structures, systems, and culture. The interplay of these elements can create a self-perpetuating system that goes beyond individual influence. The attitudes of managers and staff toward these organizational components—shaped by either trust or fear—offer insights into the underlying behavioral patterns, beliefs, and assumptions that define the organizational culture. Fear can manifest in concerns such as retribution, career stagnation, bias in performance evaluations, and doubts about competence, ultimately leading to distorted performance metrics and a culture of misinformation. As Bodnarczuk (2008) emphasizes, fear stifles curiosity, innovation, and teamwork, undermining organizational performance in subtle yet profound ways.

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Overcoming a fear-driven culture and fostering trust requires sustained commitment and resources from management at all levels, with leadership taking the initiative. This transformation necessitates that managers develop new organizational, interpersonal, and cultural skills, along with perseverance, as studies indicate it can take considerable time—up to two years per organizational level—to achieve profound, lasting change.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODS

The sample for this study consists of three hundred and fifty-four (354) academic staff members, including both teaching and non-teaching personnel, from five Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique.

The independent variable, trust, is defined according to the dimensions identified by Nwibere and Olu-Daniel (2014). These dimensions include competence-based trust, openness-based trust, reliability-based trust, and consistency-based trust. The Trust Scale from the aforementioned study was used to assess these dimensions, with respondents rating their level of trust on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). In contrast, the dependent variable, employees' creativity, is framed within the Componential Theory of Individual Creativity developed by Amabile (1988, 1996, 1997). This theory outlines three essential components of individual creativity: expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation. These components were measured using the Employees' Creativity Scale, also rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Data collection employed both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (interview) methods. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. It is important to note that all instruments used for data collection were adapted to align with the objectives of this study and the specific environmental context of Nigeria. This methodology aims to comprehensively examine the relationship between trust and employees' creativity among academic staff in Nigerian Federal Government-owned universities.

4.0 RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 Analysis of Questionnaire

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below are used to analyse the questionnaire in terms of distribution and demographic profile of respondents respectively.

Table 4.1 Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percent
Distributed	360	100%
Not retrieved	6	1.6 %
Retrieved	354	98.4%
Useful response	354	98.4%
Not used	-	NIL

Three hundred and sixty sets of questionnaires were distributed, out of which three hundred and fifty-four (98.4%) were collected, leaving six (1.6%) unreturned. All three hundred and fifty-four (98.4%) collected copies of the questionnaire were deemed useful for statistical analysis. The data gathered from respondents underwent statistical treatment as outlined in the table below:

Table 4.2: Demographic profile of respondents

S/No	Demographic variables	No	Percent
1	Gender		
	Male	206	58.2
	Female	148	41.8
	Total	354	100.00
2	Age		
	< 20 years	59	16.7
	20 – 29 years	92	26
	30 – 39 years	111	31.3
	> 40 years	92	26
	Total	354	100.00
3	Highest Education Qualification		
	FSCL	21	6
	SSCE/GCC	32	9
	HND/B.Sc	97	27.4
	MA/M.Sc/MBA	111	31.3
	Ph.D	93	26.3
	Total	354	100.00
4	Number of years in service or Tenure		
	Less than 2yrs	56	15.8
	2-4yrs	94	26.5
	5-8yrs	131	37
	9yrs and above	73	20.7
	Total	354	100.00

Table 4.2 displays the demographic profile of respondents, revealing that 206 respondents (58.2%) were male, while 148 respondents (41.8%) were female, indicating a male majority among respondents.

In the age distribution outlined in section 2 of Table 4.2, 59 respondents (16.7%) were under 20 years old, 92 respondents (26%) fell within the 20-29 age bracket, 111 respondents (31.3%) were aged between 30-39, and 92 respondents (26%) were over 40 years old. This data highlights most respondents falling within the 30-39 age range.

Section 3 of Table 4.2 presents the respondents' educational levels, with representations as follows: FSLC (21) representing (6%), SSCE/GCE (32) representing (9%), HND/B.SC (97) representing (27.4%), MA/MSC/MBA (111) representing (31.3%), and PhD. (93) representing (26.3%). This data indicates that respondents with MA/MSC/MBA degrees constitute the majority.

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In section five of Table 4.2, the distribution of respondents' years in service or tenure is presented: Less than 2 years (56), representing (15.8%), 2-4 years (94), representing (26.5%), 5-8 years (131) representing (37%), 9 years and above (73) representing (20.7%). This data suggests that respondents with 5-8 years in service or tenure are in the majority. The table summarizes the distribution and retrieval of questionnaires. Out of 243 questionnaires administered, 195 (80.25%) were retrieved, while 48 (19.75%) were not. All 243 questionnaires were deemed useful for data analysis, with none remaining unused.

4.2 Univariate Analysis

Reliability Analysis

Table 4.3: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.754	.745	14

Table 4.3 presents the SPSS findings regarding the reliability assessment of the 14-item research tool employed in this study, evaluated using Cronbach Alpha. The outcome indicated a reliability coefficient of .754, affirming the instrument's suitability for the study. This value surpasses the recommended threshold of 0.7 Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) established, thus validating the measurement instrument's internal consistency.

4.3 Statistical Testing of the Hypotheses

The formulated research hypotheses were examined, and inferences were determined in this section. The administered questionnaire was retrieved, and the responses gathered from the respondents were collated. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used for data analysis. The Pearson Coefficient value, if positive, indicates a direct relationship, but if negative, indicates an inverse relation. A direct relationship implies that when one of the variables increases, the other variable will also increase. Still, an inverse relationship implies that while there is an increase in one variable, there is a decrease in the other variable. Pearson values ranged between -1 and +1. The strength of each relationship depends on the correlation value as indicated by Pearson correlation value. $\pm 0.00-0.19$ implies a very weak correlation, $\pm 0.20-0.39$, a weak correlation; $\pm 0.40-0.59$, a moderate correlation; $\pm 0.60-0.79$, strong correlation; and $\pm 0.80-0.99$, indicates a very strong correlation. The decision criteria for every bivariate relationship at a confidence interval of 95% or a significance level of 5% depends on the probability value. A $p < 0.05$ implies a rejection of the null hypothesis, while a $p > 0.05$ implies an acceptance of the null hypothesis.

Table 4.4: Correlation Matrix for Competence-Based Trust and the Measures of Employees' Creativity Correlations

		Competence-Based Trust	Expertise	Creative-Thinking Skills	Intrinsic Task Motivation
Competence-Based Trust	Pearson Correlation	1	.900**	.814**	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Expertise	Pearson Correlation	.900**	1	.772**	.642**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Creative Thinking Skill	Pearson Correlation	.814**	.772**	1	.689**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Intrinsic Task Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.701**	.642**	.689**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	354	354	354	354

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.4 above gives the statistical representation of the relationships that exist between the variables as hypothesised.

As shown in the Table above, competence-based trust was revealed to have a strong positive and significant correlation with the measures of employees' creativity in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: expertise ($r = 0.900$, $p < 0.05$); creativity-thinking skills ($r = 0.814$, $p < 0.05$); and intrinsic task motivation ($r = 0.701$, $p < 0.05$). The positive correlation implies a direct relation between the variables. The probability value of all three hypotheses was 0.000, which happens to be less than 0.05; therefore, null hypotheses one, two, and three (H_{01} , H_{02} and H_{03}) above state that "there is no significant relationship between competence-based trust and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is rejected. Since it is a two-way test, rejecting a null hypothesis implies the acceptance of the alternate form. On this premise, the alternate forms of the various hypotheses which state that "there is a positive and significant relationship between competence-based trust and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is accepted.

Table 4.5: Correlation Matrix for Openness-Based Trust and the Measures of Employees' Creativity

		Correlations			
		Openness-Based Trust	Expertise	Creative-Thinking Skills	Intrinsic Task Motivation
Openness-Based Trust	Pearson Correlation	1	.825**	.887**	.733**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Expertise	Pearson Correlation	.825**	1	.772**	.642**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Creative-Thinking Skills	Pearson Correlation	.887**	.772**	1	.689**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Intrinsic Task Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.733**	.642**	.689**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	354	354	354	354

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.5 above gives the statistical representation of the relationships that exist between the variables as hypothesised.

As shown in the Table above, openness-based trust was revealed to have a strong positive and significant correlation with the measures of employees' creativity in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: expertise ($r = 0.825$, $p < 0.05$); creativity-thinking skills ($r = 0.887$, $p < 0.05$); and intrinsic task motivation ($r = 0.733$, $p < 0.05$). The positive correlation implies a direct relation between the variables. The probability value of all three hypotheses was 0.000, which happens to be less than 0.05; therefore, null hypotheses four, five, and six (H_{04} , H_{05} and H_{06}) above which state that "there is no significant relationship between openness-based trust and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is rejected. Since it is a two-way test, rejecting a null hypothesis implies the acceptance of the alternate form. On this premise, the alternate forms of the various hypotheses which state that "there is a positive and significant relationship between openness-based trust and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is accepted.

Table 4.6: Correlation Matrix for Reliability-Based Trust and the Measures of Employees' Creativity
Correlations

		Reliability-Based Trust	Expertise	Creative-Thinking Skills	Intrinsic Task Motivation
Reliability-Based Trust	Pearson Correlation	1	.732**	.686**	.577**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Expertise	Pearson Correlation	.732**	1	.772**	.642**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Creative-Thinking Skills	Pearson Correlation	.686**	.772**	1	.689**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Intrinsic Task Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.577**	.642**	.689**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	354	354	354	354

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.6 above gives the statistical representation of the relationships that exist between the variables as hypothesised.

As shown in the Table above, reliability-based trust was revealed to have a strong positive and significant correlation with the measures of employees' creativity in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: expertise ($r = 0.732$, $p < 0.05$); creativity-thinking skills ($r = 0.686$, $p < 0.05$); and intrinsic task motivation ($r = 0.577$, $p < 0.05$). The positive correlation implies a direct relation between the variables. The probability value of all three hypotheses was 0.000, which happens to be less than 0.05; therefore, null hypotheses seven, eight, and nine (H_{07} , H_{08} and H_{09}) above which state that "there is no significant relationship between reliability-based trust and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is rejected. Since it is a two-way test, rejecting a null hypothesis implies the acceptance of the alternate form. On this premise, the alternate forms of the various hypotheses which state that "there is a positive and significant relationship between reliability-based trust and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is accepted.

Table 4.7: Correlation Matrix for Consistency-Based Trust and the Measures of Employees' Creativity

		Correlations			
		Consistency-Based Trust	Expertise	Creative-Thinking Skills	Intrinsic Task Motivation
Consistency-Based Trust	Pearson Correlation	1	.855**	.838**	.675**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Expertise	Pearson Correlation	.855**	1	.772**	.642**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Creative-Thinking Skills	Pearson Correlation	.838**	.772**	1	.689**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	354	354	354	354
Intrinsic Task Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.675**	.642**	.689**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	354	354	354	354

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4.7 above gives the statistical representation of the relationships that exist between the variables as hypothesised.

As shown in the Table above, consistency-based trust was revealed to have a strong positive and significant correlation with the measures of employees' creativity in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: expertise ($r = 0.855$, $p < 0.05$); creativity-thinking skills ($r = 0.838$, $p < 0.05$); and intrinsic task motivation ($r = 0.675$, $p < 0.05$). The positive correlation implies a direct relation between the variables. The probability value of all three hypotheses was 0.000, which happens to be less than 0.05; therefore, null hypotheses ten, eleven, and twelve (H_{010} , H_{011} and H_{012}) above which state that "there is no significant relationship between consistency-based trust and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is rejected. Since it is a two-way test, rejecting a null hypothesis implies the acceptance of the alternate form. On this premise, the alternate forms of the various hypotheses which state that "there is a positive and significant relationship between consistency-based trust and the measures of employees' creativity (expertise, creativity-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation, respectively) in the Federal Government-owned Universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria" is accepted.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated the correlation between trust and employee creativity. Initially, the analysis explored this relationship, revealing a strong positive correlation between trust and employee creativity. This suggests that trust significantly enhances creativity among

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employees in Nigerian universities. This observation aligns with the understanding that trust within an organisation profoundly influences various aspects of its functioning. Specifically, trust fosters a positive work environment that stimulates creativity and innovation. Conversely, a lack of trust may hinder creative endeavours. This assertion resonates with the componential model of creativity proposed by Amabile (1988, 1996, 1997), which suggests that individual creativity flourishes when expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation are simultaneously nurtured.

Furthermore, this study examined the relationships between different components of trust and various facets of employee creativity. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between components of trust (acceptance-based, openness-based, reliability-based, and competence-based trust) and facets of employee creativity (expertise, creative-thinking skills, and intrinsic task motivation) in Federal Government-owned universities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. This reaffirms the crucial roles these dimensions of trust play in fostering employee creativity. These findings echo the conclusions drawn by Smith and Johnson (2018), who observed that higher levels of trust and empowerment among employees were associated with increased creativity in their roles.

The present study suggests that trust cultivates an environment conducive to creativity and innovation, where employees feel empowered to express ideas and engage in creative thinking. Such an environment fosters collaboration, knowledge sharing, and healthy competition, ultimately nurturing organisational creativity. Moreover, trust encourages employees to acquire necessary skills, derive intrinsic motivation, and develop creative-thinking abilities, fueling workplace innovation. It promotes a culture of risk-taking, open communication, and autonomy, unlocking employees' creative potential. A trusting atmosphere inspires employees to explore unconventional solutions and embrace uncertainty, driving innovation forward.

In summary, trust in the workplace catalyses creativity, enabling employees to think innovatively, take risks, communicate openly, and embrace ambiguity. This ultimately fosters a culture of innovation within the organisation. The conclusions drawn above lead to several recommendations for managing Nigerian universities.

Based on the findings above and conclusion, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance trust and promote creativity in Nigerian universities:

Firstly, the management of Nigerian universities should exemplify integrity, transparency, openness and trustworthiness, while simultaneously demonstrating competence and reliability, as these qualities can inspire excellence or optimal performance in both teaching and non-teaching members of staff, fostering an environment conducive for creativity and organisational success.

Secondly, to cultivate organisational trust, the management of Nigerian universities should engage in open and honest communication, exhibit integrity, and actively involve employees in decision-making processes that will affect them. Transparent communication is essential for establishing trusting relationships among employees within the workplace. A trustful atmosphere fosters an environment where employees feel comfortable articulating their ideas, concerns, and feedback. This openness encourages participation in

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the creative process. When employees perceive that their opinions are valued and respected, they are more likely to share knowledge, collaborate with colleagues, and dedicate their efforts to ensuring project success. This prevailing sense of trust and cohesion can result in heightened levels of employee engagement, ultimately enhancing organisational creativity and innovation.

Thirdly, the management of Nigerian universities should advocate for employee autonomy and empowerment, which can instil a sense of ownership over their roles. This autonomy enhances their willingness to take risks and think innovatively, thereby positively influencing creativity.

Fourthly, by consistently recognising and rewarding creative behaviours within the workplace, the management of Nigerian universities can cultivate a culture that motivates creativity. This approach fosters healthy competition regarding employees' innovative ideas and contributions and encourages a continuous influx of innovative solutions and improvements. By valuing and rewarding creativity, management can inspire their staff to think outside the box and contribute to their university's success.

Fifthly, the management of Nigerian universities should strive to create a supportive and inclusive work environment that nurtures employee creativity and fosters trust. Employees who feel trusted are more likely to engage in calculated risk-taking, think creatively, and explore unconventional solutions to work-related challenges.

The recommendations above, taken together, will promote trust and enhance creativity and innovation in Nigerian universities and workplaces.

APPENDIX

	TRUST SCALE					
	Items	Strongly disagree =1	Disagree =2	Not sure/ Neutral=3	Agree =4	Strongly agree=5
	Acceptance-Based Trust (2 items)					
1	In this organisation, people are valued for who they are (Respect)					
2	In this organisation, people get the recognition they deserve (Recognition).					
	Openness-Based Trust (2 items)					
1	This organisation emphasises giving new ideas and methods a fair hearing (Receptivity), and					
2	In this organisation, employees are given the opportunity to communicate openly their ideas and opinions (Disclosure).					
	Congruence-Based Trust (2 items)					
1	In this organisation, people are clear about what is expected of them (Straightforwardness) and					
2	In this organisation, the emphasis is on having high standards of honesty in everything we do (Honesty).					
	Reliability-Based Trust (2 items)					

1	In this organisation, people follow through on their responsibilities (Keeps Commitments)					
2	This organisation emphasises striving to do our best in everything we do (Seeks Excellence).					

Note: Employees are asked two set of questions about each of these statements: firstly, how important is this to you personally? Secondly, how well does your organization operate by this value? Employees do not see the elements of trust or the name of the value, just the description. The Trust Values Gap Score is the sum of all of the gaps.

SAMPLE ITEMS FOR EMPLOYEES' CREATIVITY SCALE						
S/N	Items	Strongly disagree =1	Disagree =2	Not sure/ Neutral =3	Agree =4	Strongly agree=5
Expertise or Domain-Relevant Skills and Knowledge. <i>Adapted from Sawyer (1992)</i>						
1	I am very clear as to the processes involved in the execution of my duties.					
2	I am very certain about the procedures I need to use in executing various aspects of my job.					
Intrinsic Task Motivation <i>Adapted from Eisenberger and Rhoades (2001).</i>						
3	I find my present job to be exciting and enjoyable.					
4	My present job is rather unpleasant and dull. I wish I could be given another job.					
Creative-thinking skills or Creativity Relevant Skills and Processes <i>Adapted from Tierney (1997).</i>						
5	I am confident in my ability to generate new ideas in respect of the work I do and in the overall best interest of the organisation.					
6	I am confident in my ability to do the right things in my work and bring in new ideas.					

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