

Motivation And Performance In Project-Based Organizations: Evidence From Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between motivation and performance in project-based organizations in Abia State, Nigeria. Specifically, it investigated the influence of intrinsic motivation on individual performance; the effect of extrinsic motivational factors on team performance; the mediating roles of knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors in the motivation–innovation performance relationship; and the moderating role of corporate culture in the motivation–project performance relationship. The study adopted a pragmatist philosophical position and a convergent parallel mixed-methods design. Quantitative data were obtained through a structured questionnaire from 402 valid respondents out of 420 distributed questionnaires, representing a 95.7% response rate, while qualitative evidence was obtained from 22 semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, regression, Hayes PROCESS mediation and moderation procedures, and thematic analysis. Results showed that intrinsic motivation strongly predicted individual performance ($\beta = 0.634$, $R^2 = 0.402$, $p < 0.001$), while extrinsic motivation significantly predicted team performance ($\beta = 0.492$, $R^2 = 0.242$, $p < 0.001$). Knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors significantly mediated motivation and innovation performance, with indirect effects of 0.152 and 0.127, respectively. Corporate culture significantly moderated the motivation–project performance relationship (interaction $B = 0.192$, $p < 0.001$), with the model explaining 42.0% of variance. The findings indicate that project-based organizations should combine intrinsic and extrinsic motivational practices with supportive cultural conditions and structured knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

Keywords: Motivation, Project Performance, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Organizational Culture

1. INTRODUCTION

Project-based organizations (PBOs) are an important organizational form for delivering complex, temporary, and knowledge-intensive work. Unlike traditional functional structures, PBOs organize activities around projects, assembling multidisciplinary teams to achieve objectives within specified time, cost, and resource constraints (Davies & Hobday, 2005). Their temporary character creates human-resource challenges, including changing teams, competing demands, and delivery pressures. Project outcomes depend on the knowledge, commitment, coordination, and discretionary effort of people. Motivation is therefore a critical behavioural mechanism through which project professionals direct effort toward project objectives. Intrinsic motivation arises from interest, enjoyment, autonomy, competence, and meaningful accomplishment, whereas extrinsic motivation is associated with rewards, recognition, compensation, and other external consequences (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This distinction matters because complex work requires creativity beyond financial rewards.

The project-management literature suggests that motivation–performance is not simply direct. Motivation may influence performance through knowledge sharing and collaboration, while culture and project context may strengthen or weaken its effects. Studies link high-performance work systems, innovation, and knowledge sharing (Bhatti et al., 2021), intrinsic motivation with individual performance (Khan et al., 2025), and motivation with temporary organizing (Zighan, 2020).

Despite this evidence, gaps remain. Few studies integrate individual and team performance, innovation, knowledge sharing, and organizational culture within one framework. Evidence from Nigerian project-based organizations is also limited, making its resource constraints, infrastructure challenges, talent-retention pressures, and diversity useful for examining motivational mechanisms.

This study therefore examined motivation and performance in project-based organizations in Abia State, Nigeria. It focused on whether intrinsic motivation predicts individual performance; whether extrinsic motivational factors predict team performance; whether knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors explain part of the motivation–innovation relationship; and whether corporate culture conditions the effectiveness of motivational practices.

1.1 Research Objectives

- To examine the influence of intrinsic motivation on individual performance in project-based organizations.
- To assess the effect of extrinsic motivational factors on project team performance.
- To determine whether knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors mediate the relationship between motivation and innovation performance.
- To evaluate whether corporate culture moderates the relationship between motivational practices and project performance.

1.2 Research Questions

- i. What is the influence of intrinsic motivation on individual performance in project-based organizations?
- ii. How do extrinsic motivational factors affect the performance outcomes of project teams?
- iii. To what extent does knowledge sharing mediate the relationship between motivation and innovation performance in project-based organizations?
- iv. What is the role of corporate culture in shaping the effectiveness of motivational mechanisms in project-oriented organizations?

1.3 Research Hypotheses

H01: Intrinsic motivation has no significant effect on individual performance in project-based organizations.

H02: Extrinsic motivational factors have no significant effect on team performance in project-based organizations.

H03: Knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors do not significantly mediate the relationship between motivation and innovation performance.

H04: Corporate culture does not significantly moderate the relationship between motivational practices and project performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Project-Based Organizations and Performance

Project-based organizations use projects as units of production, innovation, and organizational activity. Their flexibility mobilizes expertise and integrates knowledge, but temporary structures can create coordination problems, role uncertainty, and difficulties sustaining learning. Performance therefore extends beyond the time–cost–quality triangle to include innovation, collaboration, stakeholder outcomes, and organizational benefits.

2.2 Motivation and Individual Performance

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposes that intrinsic motivation is strengthened by autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In project environments, supportive leadership, meaningful assignments, feedback, and opportunities to apply expertise can strengthen internal motivation. Evidence indicates that intrinsic motivation connects project control systems with individual performance (Khan et al., 2025). Employees experiencing enjoyment, interest, accomplishment, and satisfaction in project work are therefore likely to display stronger performance.

H1: Intrinsic motivation has a significant positive effect on individual performance in project-based organizations.

2.3 Extrinsic Motivation and Team Performance

Expectancy Theory explains motivation through beliefs about effort, performance, and valued outcomes (Vroom, 1964). In project organizations, rewards, recognition, compensation, and incentives can influence effort when perceived as credible and fair. However, effects differ by reward type and work nature. Malek (2020) distinguished financial, recognition, and social rewards, while Ge et al. (2020) found that contingent-reward effects vary across performance domains. Recognition may be especially important in temporary teams because members need feedback that contributions are valued. Fairness and reciprocity can reinforce trust and collective commitment.

H2: Extrinsic motivational factors have a significant positive effect on team performance in project-based organizations.

2.4 Knowledge Sharing, Collaboration and Innovation Performance

The Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) framework suggests that performance depends on ability, motivation, and opportunities to apply capabilities. Motivation may encourage knowledge sharing, cross-boundary collaboration, and collective problem-solving. These behaviors support innovation because temporary teams combine diverse expertise. Evidence links high-performance work systems, innovation,

and knowledge sharing (Bhatti et al., 2021), while R&D research highlights psychological safety and project-management style as conditions for team learning (Pattanatornchai et al., 2024). Motivation may therefore affect innovation through knowledge-sharing and collaboration.

H3: Knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors significantly mediate the relationship between motivation and innovation performance.

2.5 Corporate Culture as a Moderator

Organizational culture provides shared values, norms, expectations, and behavioral cues shaping how employees interpret management practices. In project-based organizations, culture can facilitate trust, communication, cohesion, and collaboration across temporary teams. Bielova and Bielov (2025) emphasize its role in strengthening motivational mechanisms in project-oriented organizations, particularly under digitalization and distributed work.

From a contingency perspective, motivational practices may not have identical effects in every context. Trust, openness, teamwork, and supportive leadership may amplify motivation, whereas weak or inconsistent culture may undermine it. The study therefore hypothesized a moderating role for corporate culture.

H4: Corporate culture significantly moderates the relationship between motivational practices and project performance.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

The study was informed by six complementary theoretical perspectives. SDT provided the principal explanation for intrinsic motivation and individual performance; Expectancy Theory explained rewards and extrinsic motivation; the AMO framework supported how motivation is translated into performance through knowledge sharing and collaboration; Social Exchange Theory provided a basis for reciprocity, trust, and collaborative relationships; Organizational Culture Theory informed the analysis of shared values and norms; and Contingency Theory supported the argument that motivational effectiveness depends on contextual conditions. The combined framework treats motivation as a multilevel and context-dependent phenomenon.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The design was considered appropriate because it creates a systematic framework for collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis.

3.2 Study Area and Population

The study was conducted in Abia State, Nigeria, particularly Aba, Umuahia, Ohaofia, Arochukwu and Isiukwuato. The target population comprised project managers, team members, coordinators, human resource managers, and senior leaders, with approximately 6,000 project professionals.

3.3 Sample and Sampling

Using an estimated population of 6,000 and a 5% margin of error, the study calculated a minimum sample of 375 and increased the target to 420 for non-response. Stratified random sampling was used by industry, organizational size, and location, while purposive sampling selected experienced project managers, senior executives, and human resource managers. In the completed study, 420 questionnaires were distributed and 402 valid questionnaires returned, giving a 95.7% response rate.

3.4 Measures and Instrumentation

The questionnaire used five-point Likert-type response options from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Intrinsic motivation was measured using items adapted from the Work Preference Inventory and related project measures; extrinsic motivation used reward, recognition, and compensation scales; knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors used adapted scales; corporate culture covered cohesion, trust, openness, shared values, and supportive leadership; and performance covered individual, team, innovation, and project indicators. The interview guide addressed motivation, knowledge sharing, culture, performance, and contextual factors.

3.5 Validity and Reliability

The Internal consistency was satisfactory, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.892 for intrinsic motivation, 0.878 for individual performance, 0.864 for extrinsic motivation, 0.882 for team performance, 0.884 for motivation, 0.872 for knowledge sharing, 0.858 for collaborative behaviors, 0.862 for innovation performance, 0.876 for corporate culture, 0.854 for motivational practices, and 0.882 for project performance.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, Pearson correlations, and regression. Hayes PROCESS Model 4 examined mediation using bootstrap confidence intervals, while Model 1 examined corporate culture moderation. Interviews were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke (2006), and both datasets were integrated to identify convergence and provide contextual interpretation.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Respondent Profile

Of the 420 questionnaires distributed, 402 were valid for analysis. The sample was predominantly male (61.7%), while 38.3% were female. The largest age group was 26–35 years (38.8%), followed by 36–45 years (30.9%). Nearly half of respondents held a bachelor's degree or HND (49.3%), while 33.8% held master's degrees. Project team members constituted 61.2% of the sample and project managers 17.9%. Construction/engineering respondents represented 31.8%, followed by information technology (21.4%), manufacturing (15.9%), telecommunications (12.9%), consulting/professional services (10.5%), and public-sector projects (7.5%). Aba accounted for 69.2% of respondents and Umuahia 24.4%.

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	248	61.7
	Female	154	38.3
Age	18–25	48	11.9
	26–35	156	38.8
	36–45	124	30.9
	46–55	58	14.4
	Above 55	16	4.0
Education	Secondary/OND	42	10.4

	Bachelor's/HND	198	49.3
	Master's	136	33.8
	Doctorate/Professional	26	6.5
Position	Project manager	72	17.9
	Project team member	246	61.2
	Senior executive/director	38	9.5
	HR manager	26	6.5
	Project coordinator	20	4.9

4.2 Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

Mean scores indicated generally positive perceptions of motivation and performance. Intrinsic motivation had a mean of 3.82 (SD = 0.67), while individual performance had a mean of 3.88 (SD = 0.65). Extrinsic motivation had a mean of 3.45 (SD = 0.72), and team performance had a mean of 3.62 (SD = 0.68). Motivation, knowledge sharing, collaborative behaviors, and innovation performance recorded means of 3.64, 3.58, 3.61, and 3.48, respectively. Corporate culture, motivational practices, and project performance recorded means of 3.44, 3.52, and 3.68, respectively.

Construct	N	Mean	SD	Cronbach's α
Intrinsic motivation	402	3.82	0.67	0.892
Individual performance	402	3.88	0.65	0.878
Extrinsic motivation	402	3.45	0.72	0.864
Team performance	402	3.62	0.68	0.882
Motivation	402	3.64	0.65	0.884
Knowledge sharing	402	3.58	0.71	0.872
Collaborative behaviors	402	3.61	0.69	0.858
Innovation performance	402	3.48	0.72	0.862
Corporate culture	402	3.44	0.69	0.876
Motivational practices	402	3.52	0.63	0.854
Project performance	402	3.68	0.66	0.882

4.3 Intrinsic Motivation and Individual Performance

Intrinsic motivation was strongly and positively related to individual performance. The regression model produced $R = 0.634$ and $R^2 = 0.402$, indicating that intrinsic motivation accounted for approximately 40.2% of the variance in individual performance. The regression coefficient was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.634$, $t = 16.394$, $p < 0.001$). The null hypothesis that intrinsic motivation has no significant effect on individual performance was therefore rejected.

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	1.324	0.178	—	7.438	< .001

Intrinsic motivation	0.612	0.047	0.634	16.394	< .001
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The strongest descriptive indicator was enjoyment of project work ($M = 3.95$), followed by effective collaboration ($M = 3.95$) and interest in project work ($M = 3.88$). The qualitative interviews reinforced the statistical result. Participants described enjoyment, meaningful accomplishment, and belief in the value of project outcomes as sources of sustained effort, particularly when projects were undertaken under resource and infrastructure constraints.

4.4 Extrinsic Motivation and Team Performance

Extrinsic motivation significantly predicted team performance. The regression model produced $R = 0.492$ and $R^2 = 0.242$, indicating that extrinsic motivation explained approximately 24.2% of the variance in team performance. The standardized coefficient was significant ($\beta = 0.492$, $t = 11.312$, $p < 0.001$). The null hypothesis was rejected.

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p
Constant	2.186	0.162	—	13.494	< .001
Extrinsic motivation	0.446	0.047	0.492	11.312	< .001

Recognition and incentives received comparatively positive ratings, while compensation-related indicators were lower. The qualitative findings suggested that non-monetary recognition was particularly valuable where financial resources were constrained. Participants emphasized acknowledgement of team contributions, fair reward processes, and transparent recognition as mechanisms supporting team commitment.

4.5 Mediation of the Motivation–Innovation Relationship

The mediation analysis examined knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors as mechanisms linking motivation with innovation performance. Motivation significantly predicted knowledge sharing ($B = 0.482$, $p < 0.001$) and collaborative behaviors ($B = 0.456$, $p < 0.001$). Knowledge sharing significantly predicted innovation performance ($B = 0.316$, $p < 0.001$), as did collaborative behaviors ($B = 0.278$, $p < 0.001$). The direct effect of motivation on innovation performance remained significant ($B = 0.368$, $p < 0.001$).

Mediation path	B	SE	95% CI
Motivation → Knowledge sharing	0.482	0.044	[0.395, 0.569]
Motivation → Collaborative behaviors	0.456	0.043	[0.371, 0.541]
Knowledge sharing → Innovation performance	0.316	0.048	[0.221, 0.411]
Collaborative behaviors → Innovation performance	0.278	0.046	[0.187, 0.369]
Motivation → Innovation performance (direct)	0.368	0.050	[0.269, 0.467]
Motivation → Knowledge sharing → Innovation	0.152	0.032	[0.092, 0.218]

Motivation → Collaborative behaviors → Innovation	0.127	0.029	[0.073, 0.188]
Motivation → Innovation performance (total)	0.647	0.048	[0.552, 0.742]

Both indirect effects were statistically supported because their bootstrap confidence intervals excluded zero. The model explained 42.4% of the variance in innovation performance ($R^2 = 0.424$). The null hypothesis of no mediation was therefore rejected. Interview evidence similarly indicated that motivated employees were more willing to share knowledge and collaborate, while knowledge hoarding and fear of losing personal value could inhibit innovation.

4.6 Corporate Culture as a Moderator

Corporate culture significantly moderated the relationship between motivational practices and project performance. Motivational practices had a positive main effect ($B = 0.424$, $p < 0.001$), corporate culture had a positive main effect ($B = 0.368$, $p < 0.001$), and the interaction between motivational practices and corporate culture was statistically significant ($B = 0.192$, $p < 0.001$). The moderation model yielded $R = 0.648$ and $R^2 = 0.420$, explaining approximately 42.0% of the variance in project performance.

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
Motivational practices	0.424	0.046	9.217	< .001	[0.333, 0.515]
Corporate culture	0.368	0.042	8.762	< .001	[0.285, 0.451]
MP × CC	0.192	0.036	5.333	< .001	[0.121, 0.263]

The qualitative findings indicated that teamwork, mutual respect, trust, open communication, and shared values made motivational practices more effective. Conversely, weak leadership commitment and cultures emphasizing individual achievement at the expense of teamwork could undermine motivational interventions. The null hypothesis of no moderating effect was therefore rejected.

4.7 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statistical evidence	Decision
H01	$\beta = 0.634$, $p < 0.001$	Rejected
H02	$\beta = 0.492$, $p < 0.001$	Rejected
H03	Indirect effects = 0.152 and 0.127; CIs exclude zero	Rejected
H04	Interaction $B = 0.192$, $p < 0.001$	Rejected

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Intrinsic Motivation and Individual Performance

The strong positive relationship between intrinsic motivation and individual performance supports Self-Determination Theory and indicates that project professionals perform better when they experience interest, enjoyment, autonomy, and meaningful accomplishment. The magnitude of the relationship is notable: intrinsic motivation explained 40.2% of the variance in individual performance. This result is consistent with recent project-based evidence that intrinsic motivation can strengthen individual

performance and with systematic review evidence emphasizing the importance of intrinsic motivation in project work (Khan et al., 2025; Schöpper et al., 2024).

The finding also suggests that project managers should not treat motivation as synonymous with compensation. Project work frequently involves complex problem solving, uncertainty, and the need for discretionary effort. Meaningful work and opportunities to exercise competence may therefore be important resources for sustaining performance when external conditions are difficult.

5.2 Extrinsic Motivation and Team Performance

The significant but more moderate effect of extrinsic motivation supports Expectancy Theory while also indicating that rewards alone do not explain team performance. The result is compatible with evidence showing that different reward forms can have different motivational consequences (Malek, 2020; Ge et al., 2020). In the present study, recognition and incentives appeared more salient than compensation. This may reflect the practical importance of acknowledgement in environments where organizations face financial constraints.

The finding supports a balanced approach: project organizations should maintain transparent and fair reward systems while avoiding excessive dependence on financial incentives. Recognition of collective accomplishments may be especially useful in temporary teams because it reinforces a shared sense of contribution.

5.3 Knowledge Sharing and Collaborative Behaviors

The mediation results show that motivation is connected to innovation partly through knowledge sharing and collaboration. This is theoretically consistent with the AMO framework because motivation is more likely to generate performance when employees have opportunities to exchange knowledge and work collectively. The results also complement research connecting knowledge sharing with innovation in project-based organizations (Bhatti et al., 2021).

The qualitative evidence adds an important contextual explanation: knowledge may be withheld when employees believe that sharing expertise reduces their individual value or job security. Consequently, motivational systems should be designed alongside psychological safety, trust, structured lessons-learned processes, and recognition for collaborative contributions.

5.4 Corporate Culture as a Boundary Condition

The significant interaction between motivational practices and corporate culture demonstrates that motivation is context dependent. A supportive culture characterized by trust, teamwork, open communication, and shared values strengthens the effectiveness of motivational practices. This finding is consistent with Organizational Culture Theory and Contingency Theory and supports recent arguments concerning culture and motivational mechanisms in project-oriented organizations (Bielova & Bielov, 2025).

The implication is that organizations cannot simply import a reward or motivation programme and expect uniform results. Project leaders must examine the cultural conditions in which motivational practices are embedded. Culture should therefore be treated as part of the motivational architecture of the project organization rather than as a background organizational variable.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study demonstrates that motivation is a significant determinant of performance in project-based organizations in Abia State. Intrinsic motivation exhibited the strongest direct relationship, explaining 40.2% of the variance in individual performance. Extrinsic motivation also had a significant relationship

with team performance, although its explanatory power was lower at 24.2%. Knowledge sharing and collaborative behaviors provided significant pathways through which motivation was associated with innovation performance, while corporate culture significantly strengthened the relationship between motivational practices and project performance.

6.1 Recommendations for Project-Based Organizations

Organizations should invest in motivation by treating it as a strategic priority with clear goals, metrics, and accountability, allocating resources to motivational practices, and creating accountability for motivation outcomes. They should build learning organizations by fostering a culture of continuous learning, implementing knowledge management systems, and supporting innovation. Organizations should adapt to digital transformation by investing in digital tools and training, developing digital skills, and creating hybrid work models. Additionally, organizations should develop project management capability through certification and training, communities of practice, and clear career paths for project professionals.

6.1.1 Specific Actionable Recommendations

Immediate actions within 0-3 months should include conducting a motivation audit to identify current motivational strengths and gaps, implementing a recognition program such as "Project Star" awards, establishing regular knowledge-sharing sessions on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, creating team-building opportunities, and communicating motivation priorities. Short-term actions within 3-12 months should include developing a comprehensive motivation strategy aligned with organizational goals, training project managers in autonomy-supportive leadership, implementing performance management systems that provide regular feedback, developing career paths for project professionals, and addressing knowledge hoarding. Medium-term actions within 1-3 years should include building a culture of knowledge sharing through systems, incentives, and norms, investing in digital infrastructure to support virtual and hybrid work, developing partnerships with educational institutions for talent development, advocating for supportive policies at the state and local levels, and implementing systems for measuring and monitoring motivation.

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