

**PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE AND EMPLOYEE ADAPTABILITY OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES
IN RIVERS STATE**

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between psychological climate and employee adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State. The study was guided by 3 objectives and 3 hypotheses. The survey designed used for the study was a correlational survey design. The target population for this study was 5000 staff in Rivers State Public Universities (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education). The study adopted Taro Yamene sampling technique to ascertain a sample size of 400 staff. A self-administered structured questionnaire titled "Psychological Climate and Employee Adaptability (PCEAQ)" was used to obtain data from respondents. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient of 0.79 was ascertained. PPMC (person product moment correlation) was used to test hypotheses on SPSS version 25. There is a significant relationship between the dimensions of psychological climate and employee adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State. The study recommended that to enhance emotional adaptability, institutions should provide clear and consistent communication about job roles, expectations, and performance criteria.

INTRODUCTION

The trending changes in the global world has made businesses to struggle for survival or acquire sustainable competitive advantage and this has made organisations to understand the factors that influences employee's behaviour which produced a great deal of interest in investigating employee perceptions of climate within the organization. In the dynamic and increasingly complex environment of higher education, the psychological climate within public universities plays a critical role in shaping the behavior and performance of employees. Psychological climate refers to employees' perceptions and interpretations of their work environment, including aspects such as support, autonomy, trust, fairness, and recognition (James et al., 2008). These perceptions significantly influence how staff members respond to organizational changes, challenges, and innovations collectively referred to as employee adaptability. In public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, where administrative, economic, and technological challenges are commonplace, understanding this relationship is vital for institutional development and workforce effectiveness. Employee adaptability, defined as the capacity of employees to adjust effectively to changing roles, work environments, and expectations (Pulakos et al., 2000), is increasingly essential in the face of institutional reforms, digital transformation, and funding constraints faced by Nigerian public universities. In such settings, employees are expected to be flexible, resilient, and innovative. However, their ability to adapt largely depends on how they perceive the psychological environment fostered by university leadership.

The increasing call for transformation in Nigerian universities driven by the Federal Government, National Universities Commission (NUC), and global education standards necessitates a workforce that is not only competent but also adaptable. Hence, this study becomes timely and significant in identifying the extent to which the psychological climate in public universities in Rivers State enhances or hinders employees' adaptability. Understanding this relationship will provide insights

for university administrators, policymakers, and human resource professionals to develop strategies that foster supportive work environments conducive to adaptability, innovation, and sustained academic excellence.

Statement of the Problem

Public universities in Rivers State operate within increasingly volatile academic and administrative environments driven by policy shifts, funding constraints, technological advancement, and rising performance expectations. These systemic pressures demand high levels of adaptability from employees such as academics, administrators, and support staff alike. Employee adaptability has become an essential trait in today's rapidly changing higher education landscape. In public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria, employees are expected to demonstrate high levels of flexibility in adjusting to technological innovations, policy reforms, funding constraints, and administrative restructuring. However, many of these institutions continue to struggle with employee resistance to change, poor performance, and low engagement symptoms often rooted in challenges related to adaptability. Despite its importance, employee adaptability remains insufficiently developed or supported, particularly in the dimensions of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional adaptability.

In many public universities in Rivers State, rigid administrative structures, inadequate training, and unclear expectations inhibit employees from adopting new methods or roles. Staff may be reluctant to embrace e-learning platforms, interdisciplinary collaboration, or digital tools due to lack of direction or fear of sanctions for failure. This rigidity often results in stagnant work practices, inefficiency, and institutional resistance to change.

Many university employees are not regularly exposed to environments that stimulate intellectual flexibility or continuous learning. The lack of institutional investment in professional development, coupled with limited access to innovation-enhancing resources, contributes to employees holding on to outdated methods of teaching, research, and administration. This cognitive rigidity hinders problem-solving, innovation, and responsiveness to external demands such as accreditation standards and global academic trends.

The presence of toxic work environments, limited supervisory support, and perceived favoritism breeds anxiety, frustration, and disengagement. Employees who cannot emotionally adapt to conflict, ambiguity, or role changes often become withdrawn or defensive, weakening teamwork, morale, and institutional harmony. Such emotional strain contributes to low productivity and increased staff turnover, further destabilizing the academic environment. Collectively, these challenges point to a deep-rooted problem in how public universities in Rivers State support or hinder employee adaptability. The absence of a supportive psychological climate, capacity-building mechanisms, and inclusive leadership further compounds the problem. It is against this downturn that the study examined psychological climate and employee adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

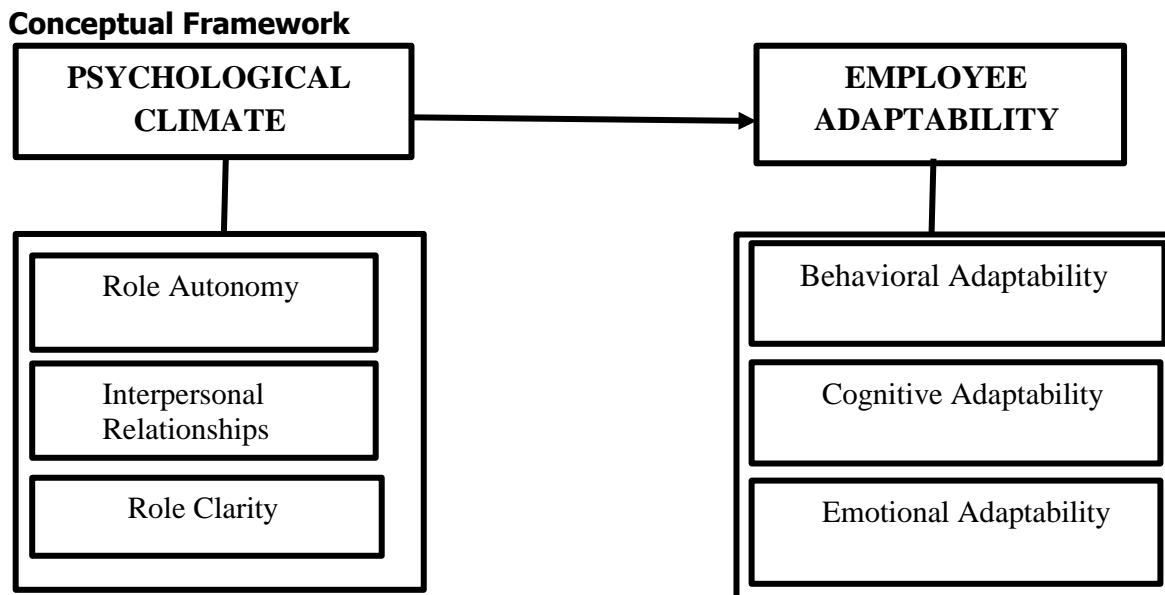


Figure 1: Conceptual framework on psychological climate and employee adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

Source: Adapted from Brown & Leigh (1940), Pulakos et al., (2000), & Griffin et al., (2010).

Aims & Objectives

The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between psychological climate and employee adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State. The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the relationship between role autonomy and behavioural adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.
2. To determine the relationship between interpersonal relationship and cognitive adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.
3. To determine the relationship between role clarity and emotional adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- 1) What is the relationship between role autonomy and behavioural adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State?
- 2) What is the relationship between interpersonal relationship and cognitive adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State?
- 3) What is the relationship between role clarity and emotional adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State?

Hypothesis

The following null hypotheses were formulated and was tested at a significant level of 0.05.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between role autonomy and behavioural adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and cognitive adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between role clarity and emotional adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section reviews extant literatures under the headings of conceptual review, theoretical review and empirical review.

Conceptual Review

Psychological Climate

James and Jones (1974) define psychological climate as the individual's perception of the psychological impact of the work environment on his or her own well-being. Psychological climate refers to the individual employee's perception and interpretation of their work environment, including aspects such as leadership behavior, support, recognition, communication, autonomy, and fairness. It differs from organizational climate, which reflects a shared perception among group members; psychological climate is more personal and subjective (James et al., 2008). This construct is critical because employees' interpretations of their work environment directly influence their motivation, behavior, and job satisfaction. When employees perceive their climate as supportive and empowering, they are more likely to be engaged, committed, and proactive in the workplace.

Research has shown that a positive psychological climate is associated with various beneficial outcomes, such as increased job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and psychological well-being. For instance, Parker et al. (2003) found that psychological climate significantly influenced employees' motivation and willingness to innovate in the face of change. In academic institutions like public universities, where employees often face complex administrative demands, shifting academic policies, and resource constraints, the psychological climate can either facilitate or hinder adaptability, productivity, and collaboration. A climate characterized by trust, role clarity, and open communication is essential for fostering a resilient and agile workforce.

Psychological climate acts as a mediating factor between organizational practices and employee outcomes. For example, Kuenzi and Schminke (2009) emphasized that ethical leadership and fair decision-making are only effective when perceived as such by employees, highlighting the importance of individual perceptions. Understanding psychological climate can provide critical insights into staff performance issues and guide leadership in creating environments that nurture adaptability and institutional excellence. Promoting a positive psychological climate is not merely about structural change but about shaping how employees experience their daily work lives.

Dimensions of Psychological Climate

Role Autonomy

Role autonomy refers to the degree to which employees perceive they have control over their work processes, decision-making, and the execution of their tasks. It is a critical component of psychological climate because it influences how empowered and motivated individuals feel in their roles. When employees experience high role autonomy, they are more likely to exhibit creativity, take initiative, and assume ownership of their responsibilities. According to Hackman and Oldham's (1976) Job Characteristics Model, autonomy is a core job dimension that enhances intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and performance. In academic institutions, especially public universities, role autonomy is crucial for encouraging academic freedom, innovation in teaching, and independent research.

However, when role autonomy is limited due to bureaucratic structures, micromanagement, or unclear delegation of authority as is often the case in public universities in developing contexts—employees may feel powerless, disengaged, and demotivated. This lack of perceived control can lead to resistance to change and a decline in adaptability. Breugh (1999) found that perceived autonomy was positively associated with job involvement and negatively related to turnover intentions. For public universities in Rivers State, ensuring that faculty and staff have the autonomy to plan, execute, and evaluate their work independently is vital for enhancing their adaptability and overall institutional effectiveness.

Interpersonal relationships

Interpersonal relationships in the workplace refer to the quality of social interactions and working relationships among employees, supervisors, and peers. A psychologically positive climate is often characterized by trust, mutual respect, collaboration, and effective communication among members of the organization. High-quality interpersonal relationships can enhance team cohesion, reduce conflict, and foster emotional support, all of which contribute to employee adaptability and resilience. According to Chiaburu and Harrison (2008), supportive coworker relationships significantly predict organizational citizenship behaviors and engagement, especially in environments facing frequent changes or stressors.

Conversely, when interpersonal relationships are strained due to mistrust, poor communication, favoritism, or unresolved conflicts, employees may feel isolated, threatened, or emotionally distressed. This not only undermines morale but also reduces willingness to collaborate or adapt to new work demands. In public universities, where teamwork and collegiality are essential for research, teaching, and service delivery, toxic interpersonal climates can derail progress. Eisenberger et al. (2002) found that perceived supervisor support and positive social interactions directly influenced employees' affective commitment and performance. Hence, nurturing constructive interpersonal relationships is critical for fostering an adaptive, productive academic workforce

Role Clarity

Role clarity refers to the extent to which employees understand their job responsibilities, performance expectations, and how their roles fit within the broader goals of the organization. When individuals clearly understand what is expected of them and how to achieve those expectations, they are more likely to perform effectively and respond confidently to change. Role clarity reduces uncertainty, enhances decision-making, and improves efficiency. According to Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (2010), high role clarity is associated with greater job satisfaction, reduced stress, and improved job performance.

On the other hand, role ambiguity where job expectations and responsibilities are vague or contradictory can result in confusion, stress, and disengagement. In public universities in Rivers State, where changes in policies and roles are frequent, a lack of role clarity can impair employees' ability to adapt effectively. Employees may be unsure about reporting lines, evaluation criteria, or resource access, which can lead to job dissatisfaction and errors. Farh, Seo, and Tesluk (2012) emphasized that clarity in job roles enables employees to respond more proactively to organizational change. Therefore, providing clear role definitions and consistent communication is vital for promoting psychological safety and adaptability among university staff.

Concept of Employee Adaptability

Griffin, Neal, and Parker (2007) define employee adaptability as an individual's capacity to modify cognitive, behavioral, and emotional responses in order to meet the changing demands of different tasks, roles, or environments within the workplace. Employee adaptability refers to the capacity of individuals to adjust their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions in response to dynamic work environments, evolving job demands, or organizational change. It encompasses a range of adaptive behaviors, including learning new skills, shifting cognitive strategies, modifying interpersonal approaches, and regulating emotions to maintain performance under uncertainty or stress. Pulakos et al. (2000) identified adaptability as a multi-dimensional construct that includes handling emergencies, learning new technologies, dealing with work stress, and demonstrating cultural adaptability. In today's volatile and fast-paced work environments especially in institutions like public universities employee adaptability is essential for organizational survival and competitiveness. Employees who are adaptable are better equipped to manage challenges, embrace innovation, and contribute to institutional goals.

Moreover, adaptability is not a fixed trait but a dynamic competency that can be developed and enhanced through supportive leadership, training, and conducive organizational climate. Research by Park and Park (2019) emphasized that psychological resources such as resilience, openness to experience, and proactive personality significantly enhance adaptive performance. Additionally, studies have shown that organizations that foster a culture of continuous learning, clear communication, and role autonomy tend to experience higher levels of employee adaptability (Shoss et al., 2012). In the context of public universities in Rivers State, where frequent policy reforms, funding uncertainties, and technological transitions occur, the ability of staff to adapt cognitively, behaviorally, and emotionally determines their effectiveness, engagement, and contribution to institutional development.

Measures of Employee Adaptability

Behavioral Adaptability

Behavioral adaptability refers to an employee's capacity to modify or adjust their actions and behaviors in response to changing work environments, roles, or interpersonal demands. It involves the flexibility to alter communication styles, work habits, and interpersonal strategies to fit new or unfamiliar situations. Employees who demonstrate strong behavioral adaptability are more likely to thrive in dynamic work settings, collaborate effectively across teams, and take on new roles with minimal friction. According to LePine, Colquitt, and Erez (2000), behaviorally adaptable individuals are more capable of adjusting their performance strategies and routines in response to shifting demands, which improves both individual and team performance. According to Ployhart and Bliese (2006), behaviorally adaptable employees contribute to better individual and team performance, especially under dynamic task conditions.

In public university settings, where reforms, policy shifts, and leadership transitions are common, behavioral adaptability becomes especially vital. Staff who are rigid or resistant to adjusting their conduct may struggle to meet evolving administrative or academic requirements. On the other hand, behaviorally adaptable employees tend to be proactive in responding to feedback, mentoring others, and taking on leadership roles when needed. As highlighted by Griffin, Parker, and Mason (2010), such employees engage in proactive role adjustments that support both personal development and institutional innovation.

Cognitive Adaptability

Cognitive adaptability is the mental flexibility that allows employees to think differently, learn quickly, and apply new knowledge or strategies in uncertain or novel work situations. It involves adjusting thought processes, reframing problems, and switching between alternative solutions or perspectives as needed. According to Haynie, Shepherd, Mosakowski, and Earley (2010), cognitive adaptability is critical for effective decision-making and problem-solving, especially in environments characterized by complexity and rapid change. Employees with high cognitive adaptability are typically more creative, strategic, and capable of learning on the fly. Cognitive adaptability benefits employees by enabling them to think strategically, reframe challenges, and apply flexible problem-solving strategies in unfamiliar or uncertain situations. As noted by Haynie et al. (2010), such adaptability is associated with improved decision-making, greater learning capability, and enhanced entrepreneurial thinking.

In the context of public universities especially in Nigeria where technological reforms, curriculum updates, and administrative decentralization are frequent cognitive adaptability supports employees in absorbing new information, adapting to unfamiliar systems, and staying relevant. Academics, for example, may need to shift from traditional to blended learning models, requiring mental agility and willingness to alter established teaching philosophies. As Sadri and Tran (2002) observed, cognitive flexibility helps employees develop new competencies and cope with structural changes, making it a cornerstone of long-term organizational agility and employee retention.

Emotional Adaptability

Emotional adaptability refers to an employee's ability to regulate and manage their emotional responses when faced with stress, uncertainty, or emotionally charged workplace situations. It includes the capacity to remain calm under pressure, show empathy, respond constructively to feedback, and maintain positive interpersonal relations. Employees with high emotional adaptability are better equipped to cope with ambiguity, resolve conflicts, and support their colleagues during organizational transitions. According to Fugate, Kinicki, and Prussia (2008), emotional adaptability is a key element of "psychological resilience," which enhances job satisfaction, well-being, and performance. Emotional adaptability supports employee well-being and interpersonal harmony by helping individuals manage stress, regulate emotions, and respond calmly in high-pressure or emotionally charged work environments. According to Fugate et al. (2008), emotional adaptability significantly contributes to psychological resilience and facilitates smoother adjustment to organizational restructuring and uncertainty.

Public universities, often marked by funding uncertainties, policy instability, and staff-student tensions, present emotionally challenging environments. In such settings, emotionally adaptable employees help stabilize work climates by demonstrating patience, empathy, and professionalism. They are more likely to navigate administrative tensions, support peers experiencing burnout, and maintain composure during institutional crises. Research by Jordan and Troth (2004) also affirms that emotional intelligence—a major component of emotional adaptability—predicts cooperative behavior and conflict resolution effectiveness. Therefore, fostering emotional adaptability among staff is essential for sustainable academic and administrative excellence.

Theoretical Review

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Albert Bandura (1986)

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) posits that human behavior is the result of a dynamic and reciprocal interaction between personal factors (such as cognition and emotions), behavioral patterns, and environmental influences. It emphasizes that individuals are not passive reactors to environmental forces; instead, they actively shape and are shaped by their social environment. In the workplace, this translates to how employees perceive their psychological climate (i.e., autonomy, role clarity, interpersonal relationships) and how this perception influences their adaptive behaviors.

In public universities, employees continuously interpret and respond to changes such as educational reforms, digitalization, or funding pressures. According to Bandura (1986), employees' belief in their own efficacy (a core part of SCT) plays a key role in how they adapt behaviorally, cognitively, and emotionally to organizational challenges. A positive psychological climate—where employees feel supported, respected, and clear about their roles reinforces self-efficacy and motivates employees to adapt constructively. Therefore, SCT helps explain how the internalization of a supportive psychological climate enhances employee adaptability through observed behaviors, self-reflection, and reinforcement mechanisms.

Empirical Review

Ojedokun and Adeyemo (2023) examined the influence of psychological climate on employee adaptability in the Nigerian Banking Sector. Correlational survey design was employed to examine the relationship between psychological climate and employee adaptability. The population of study includes employees working in various commercial banks across Lagos State, Nigeria. A sample of 350 employees was selected using a stratified random sampling technique to ensure representation from different banks and job levels. Primary data was collected through the administration of questionnaires. Two standardized questionnaires were used: the Psychological Climate Questionnaire (PCQ) adapted from [citation needed] and the Employee Adaptability Scale (EAS). The questionnaires were validated through content validity, which involved expert review to ensure the items accurately measured the constructs. The reliability of the instruments was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The PCQ had a reliability coefficient of 0.82, and the EAS had a reliability

coefficient of 0.85, indicating good internal consistency. The questionnaires were administered physically to the respondents after obtaining informed consent. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis) using SPSS software. The study revealed a statistically significant positive relationship between psychological climate dimensions (e.g., support, innovation, and autonomy) and employee adaptability. Specifically, a positive psychological climate was found to significantly predict employee adaptability in the banking sector. The regression analysis showed that psychological climate explained a significant proportion of the variance in employee adaptability. The study concluded that a positive psychological climate is crucial for fostering employee adaptability in the Nigerian banking sector. Banks that cultivate a supportive, innovative, and autonomous work environment are more likely to have employees who can effectively adapt to changes

METHODOLOGY

The survey designed used is correlational survey design. The target population for this study was 5000 staff in Rivers State Public Universities (University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education). The study adopted Taro Yamene sampling technique to ascertain a sample size of 400 staff. A self-administered structured questionnaire titled "Psychological Climate and Employee Adaptability (PCEAQ) was independently subjected to face and content validity by the supervisor and two other experts in the Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. The corrections and suggestions of the validators were affected on the finale copy of the instrument which was used to collect primary data and the data obtained were accordingly analyzed. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient below the 0.75 was used ascertained.

Table 1: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.79	3

Source: Researcher Computation via SPSS Version 25

The result of the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test indicates .79 which is above .70 which implies that the items are reliable. PPMC (person product moment correlation) was used to test hypotheses on SPSS version 25.

Analysis of Data

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between role autonomy and behavioural adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 2: Correlations on Role Autonomy and Behavioural Adaptability

		Role Autonomy	Behavioural Adaptability
Role Autonomy	Pearson Correlation	1	.755**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Behavioural Adaptability	Pearson Correlation	.755**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

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

Table 2: Correlations on role autonomy and behavioural adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State revealed that there is a significant relationship between role autonomy and behavioural adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State (where $P = .000$) thus leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between role autonomy and behavioural adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and cognitive adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

Table 3: Correlations on Interpersonal Relationship and Cognitive Adaptability

		Interpersonal Relationship	Cognitive Adaptability
Interpersonal Relationship	Pearson Correlation	1	.706**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Cognitive Adaptability	Pearson Correlation	.706**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

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

Table 3: Correlations on interpersonal relationship and cognitive adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State revealed that there is a significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and cognitive adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State (where $P = .000$) thus leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and cognitive adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between role clarity and emotional adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State

Table 4: Correlations on Role Clarity and Emotional Adaptability

		Role Clarity	Emotional Adaptability
Role Clarity	Pearson Correlation	1	.750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Emotional Adaptability	Pearson Correlation	.750**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400

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

Table 4: Correlations on role clarity and emotional adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State revealed that there is a significant relationship between role clarity and emotional adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State (where $P = .750 = \text{sig}, .000$) thus leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between role clarity and emotional adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

With respect to research question one; the correlations on role autonomy and behavioural adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State revealed that there is a significant relationship between role autonomy and behavioural adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State (where $P = .755 = \text{sig}, .000$) thus leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between role autonomy and behavioural adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State. This result is in line with the findings of study by Obiekwe, Eze, and Nwachukwu (2022), conducted among academic staff in public universities in Nigeria, the researchers found that role autonomy significantly enhanced behavioural adaptability, especially in dynamically changing academic environments. The findings indicated that employees with greater discretion in their job roles responded more effectively to institutional changes, technological demands, and curriculum innovations. Autonomy enabled them to tailor their behaviors such as adjusting lecture delivery methods or collaborating across faculties to meet new challenges.

With respect to research question and hypothesis two; correlations on interpersonal relationship and cognitive adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State revealed that there is a significant relationship interpersonal relationship and cognitive adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State (where $P = .706 = \text{sig}, .000$) thus leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between interpersonal relationship and cognitive adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State. This result is supported by the study of study by Chikwe and Nwosu (2022) revealed that collaborative work environments characterized by mutual respect, open communication, and team trust fostered cognitive flexibility—i.e., the capacity to reinterpret problems, explore multiple solutions, and shift mental strategies in response to changing educational demands. The authors concluded that healthy interpersonal interactions enhance intellectual openness, encourage knowledge sharing, and build resilience in cognitively demanding situations.

With respect to research question and hypotheses 3; Correlations on role clarity and emotional adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State revealed that there is a significant relationship between role clarity and emotional adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State (where $P = .750 = \text{sig}, .000$) thus leading to acceptance of alternate hypothesis: there is a significant relationship between role clarity and emotional adaptability of Public Universities in Rivers State. This finding is in line with Okonkwo and Emeh (2022) who examined role clarity was found to significantly enhance emotional adaptability among lecturers in Nigerian public universities. Clear understanding of job roles, expectations, and performance criteria reduced workplace anxiety and emotional stress, enabling staff to manage emotional reactions effectively during high-pressure situations such as academic audits, student evaluations, and administrative changes.

CONCLUSION

The study of psychological climate and employee adaptability in public universities in Rivers State reveals a significant link between employees' perceptions of their work environment and their ability to adjust behaviorally, cognitively, and emotionally to organizational changes. A positive psychological climate characterized by clear role autonomy, supportive interpersonal relationships, and well-defined role clarity serves as a catalyst for enhancing employee adaptability, which is crucial in the face of ongoing reforms, technological shifts, and academic demands. When staff perceive their work environment as empowering, collaborative, and structured, they are more likely to respond proactively, think flexibly, and manage stress effectively, thereby contributing to the overall performance and sustainability of higher education institutions in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the stated objectives, here are three tailored recommendations aligned with each objective, targeting the enhancement of employee adaptability through psychological climate variables in public universities in Rivers State:

1. University management should grant employees greater autonomy by clearly defining roles while allowing flexibility in how tasks are executed which it will encourages employees to adapt their behaviors to meet changing job demands more confidently and efficiently.
2. Public universities should invest in team-building activities, peer mentoring, and communication skills training to foster trust, cooperation, and supportive professional relationships.
3. To enhance emotional adaptability, institutions should provide clear and consistent communication about job roles, expectations, and performance criteria.

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