

**RETHINKING IKECHUKWU ANTHONY KANU'S RESEARCH
CONSISTENCY FRAMEWORK (RCF) IN THE LIGHT OF COL 3:23-24**

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Abstract

Amid growing concerns about the decline of research culture and the obsession with academic titles in Nigeria, this study revisits Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu's Research Consistency Framework (RCF) through the interpretive lens of Col 3:23–24. By integrating theological, philosophical, and motivational perspectives, the paper situates research not merely as a professional obligation but as a vocation rooted in divine stewardship. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), it explores how RCF nurtures autonomy, competence, and relatedness among scholars, promoting intrinsic motivation and ethical consistency. The exegetical engagement with Col 3:23–24 further reframes academic labour as a spiritual act of service to God rather than a pursuit of prestige. Employing a qualitative hermeneutic methodology, the study argues that true scholarly excellence transcends the quest for titles and recognition; it lies in cultivating humility, communal responsibility, and sustained research integrity. In the end, the paper calls for a renewal of academic vocation where intellectual effort becomes both worship and service for the common good.

Keywords: Research, Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony, Motivation, Consistency Framework

Introduction

Titles play a significant role in African societies; as such, the craving for titles is considered a major stride in one's life. Most African people seem to give titles a certain degree of reverence, and this tendency has become deeply woven into the cultural fabric of identity, particularly in Nigeria. Hence, the desire to have a title attached to one's name is regarded as a symbol of achievement and prestige, often pursued even by those who have not earned it meritoriously. The undeserved acquisition of titles has consequently bred a pseudo lifestyle that disconnects many title holders from the authentic realities they claim to represent. This phenomenon reflects what Odumegwu-Ojukwu (1989) described as a national malaise, where "life and appearances are generally untrue; the acquisition of privilege becomes

the only criterion valid for the measurement of success.” Title holders concomitantly run with privileges in African societies. An average titled man or woman, irrespective of the kind or type of title, ranging from honorary, political, academic, ecclesiastical, or traditional, becomes a symbol of pride and privilege. As such, Odumegwu-Ojukwu (1989) laments this tragedy as an “addict of privileges,” describing Nigerians as profaning tradition, buying degrees, and wearing appearances as a false measure of worth. In his words:

The bane of Nigerian society is the obsession of her citizenry to acquire privilege. We profane tradition to acquire titles; we buy degrees and join exclusive and sometimes secret societies. We design and wear costumes so laughable and call them traditional. We wear any conceivable uniform. Our vehicles carry exclusive numbers. Each group, because of its exclusive nature, negates our social unity and distorts our national cohesion. The Nigerian of today is an addict of privilege.

The concerns raised in this lamentation call for sober reflection, particularly within the sphere of academic titles. In contemporary Nigerian academia, the pursuit of honorifics such as “Doctor” or “Professor” has often eclipsed the deeper intellectual and moral demands of scholarship. The title has become, in some instances, a symbol of prestige rather than a testament to consistent research engagement and contribution to knowledge. As the title “PhD” increasingly assumes an honorary or transactional dimension, purchased, bestowed, or socially paraded, it raises a pressing question: what is in a title? This question bears significant weight in academic culture, where titles carry not only prestige but also the expectation of intellectual rigour, moral example, and commitment to truth.

Historically, research has been the hallmark of the academic vocation since the nineteenth-century “academic revolution,” when universities began integrating inquiry into teaching (Etzkowitz, 2003; Lebechi, 2021). Yet, in many Nigerian universities, research output remains inconsistent. Once senior ranks such as professorship are attained, research is sometimes perceived less as a vocation and more as an obligation driven by the “publish or perish” imperative. This challenge, as Okoduwa et al. (2018) note, is exacerbated by systemic obstacles including inadequate facilities, limited funding, poor mentorship, and a weak research culture. Ternenge and Sabo (2023) further observe that the research process itself remains enigmatic to many, leading to frustration, disengagement, and even abandonment of scholarly inquiry. Nevertheless, the pursuit of knowledge remains inseparable from the essence of academia, for research is central to advancing understanding, solving social problems, and contributing to the flourishing of humanity.

Against this background, this study poses three interrelated questions: Can Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu's Research Consistency Framework (RCF) address the challenges faced by Nigerian academics in sustaining viable research attitudes? How can RCF enhance research productivity and publication output? And what role does mentorship play in shaping enduring research commitment? In addressing these questions, the paper adopts an interdisciplinary lens that brings together philosophical reflection, motivational theory, and theological exegesis. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of motivation offers a psychological foundation for understanding autonomy, competence, and relatedness in research engagement, while the biblical exhortation in Colossians 3:23-24 provides a theological and ethical frame. The Pauline injunction to "work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" reframes academic labour as an act of stewardship rather than a pursuit of prestige. In this sense, research consistency becomes a spiritual as well as professional calling, anchored in humility, purpose, and service. By situating Kanu's RCF within this theo-philosophical framework, the study underscores the need for a renewed academic ethos, one that transcends the vanity of titles and reclaims scholarship as vocation. Methodologically, the paper employs a qualitative hermeneutic approach, engaging textual interpretation and conceptual analysis to clarify and reframe the moral and motivational foundations of research consistency in the academy.

Theoretical Framework

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) of motivation, created by psychologists Richard Ryan and Edward Deci (1991), overturned the widely held notion that rewarding behaviour is the most effective approach to persuade people to do tasks (Wehmeyer & Shogren, 2016). SDT posits that human behaviour is motivated by three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This framework provides a useful lens to explore how Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu's Research Consistency Framework (RCF) supports academics' autonomy, competence, and relatedness in research (Ryan & Deci, 2020). It is critical to understand that the psychological development outlined by SDT is not a given; while humans are naturally inclined toward growth, they require ongoing support. Rooted in the psychology of intrinsic motivation, SDT highlights the act of performing a task for its own sake, rather than for external demands, incentives, or rewards (Deci, 1971; Ryan, 1995).

A Biographical Sketch of Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu

Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu is a renowned Nigerian academic, philosopher, and priest of the Augustinian Order. Born on November 20, 1981, in Imo State, Nigeria, Kanu hails from Arondizuogu in Ideato North Local Government Area. His

parents, Sir Emmanuel Nwafor Kanu and Lady Cecilia Menwa Kanu, were lecturers and devout Catholics. Kanu's educational journey began at Command Children Nursery and Primary School, Jimeta-Yola, Adamawa State, from 1984 to 1986. He later attended Demonstration Primary School, Jimeta-Yola, Adamawa State, from 1987 to 1992. Kanu's secondary education took place at Army Day Secondary School, Jimeta-Yola, Adamawa State, and later at St. Peter's Minor Seminary, Yola, where he completed his secondary school education in 1999. Kanu pursued higher education in philosophy at the Urbaniana University, Rome, through Saint Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary, Makurdi, where he earned a first-class degree in philosophy. He then proceeded to Saint Augustine's Major Seminary, Jos, an affiliate of the University of Jos, Plateau State, to study theology. After ordination to the Catholic priesthood, he then furthered his studies with master's degrees at the Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (Religion and Human Relations), and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (Metaphysics). His doctorate degrees are from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (African Traditional Religion), and Selinus University of Sciences and Literature, London (African Philosophy).

He has since then held the following appointments: Professor of African Philosophy and Religion (Tansian University, Umunya, Anambra State); Visiting Professor: University of Jos, Veritas University, Abuja, Augustinian Institute, Makurdi, and Saint Albert the Great Major Seminary, Abeokuta; Rector, Villanova Polytechnic, Imesi Ile, Osun State (former); Prior Provincial: Augustinian Order in Nigeria. Moreover, Kanu has received numerous awards and recognition, which include but are not limited to Honourary Doctorate Degrees from Commonwealth University, London, and London Bridge Business School; Global Academician of the Year 2020 from Eudoxia Research Centre; International Louis Althusser Golden Award of the Year 2020; and Kwame Nkrumah Transformational Leadership Medal (TLM) the African Institute for Public Administration (AIPA), Accra, Ghana. Kanu's research focuses on African philosophy, African traditional religion, and cultural studies. He has published over 220 academic papers, written and edited around 70 books, and presented over 250 papers at national and international conferences. He is the editor-in-chief of several journals, including *Igwebuike: An African Journal of Arts and Humanities and Journal of African Studies and Sustainable Development*.

Col 3:23-24: Towards an exegesis.

Text: *kai pan ho ti ean poiēte, ek psychēs ergazesthe, hōs tō Kyriō kai ouk anthrōpois, eidotes hoti apo Kyriou apolēmpsesthe tēn antapodosin tēs klēronomias; tō Kyriō Christō douleuete* (Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men,

knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ).

Historical and Social Context of Col 3:23–24

The Epistle to the Colossians was written by Paul, or possibly a Pauline disciple, to the Christian community in Colossae, a relatively small city in Asia Minor noted for its diverse religious and cultural influences (O'Brien, 1982). The immediate audience of Col 3:23–24 were household slaves, as indicated by the preceding verse (Col. 3:22). Within the letter's broader exhortations, however, the principle of wholehearted service "to the Lord" extends beyond slaves to encompass all believers. The universal scope is evident in Paul's use of inclusive language, such as "whatever you do" (Col. 3:23), which situates daily tasks, whether menial or esteemed, within the realm of Christian discipleship (Wright, 1986). Thus, while socially contextualized to household slaves, the theological principles articulated here are trans-historical and remain applicable to various vocations, including contemporary academic work.

The social backdrop of this exhortation is the Roman *Haustafeln* or household codes, which organized domestic life around hierarchical relations between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves (Balch, 1983). Slaves in this context were often subjected to harsh treatment, denied autonomy, and considered property rather than persons. They worked long hours with little recognition or reward. Paul's instructions, therefore, must be understood against this backdrop of systemic injustice. While he does not call for the immediate overthrow of slavery, he reframes the meaning of work by directing it toward Christ rather than earthly masters. In this way, Paul introduces a subversive reorientation of value and dignity into the oppressive household structures of his time (Barth & Blanke, 1994).

The theological tension underlying Col 3:23–24 is the question of how Christians can live faithfully under unjust or hierarchical systems. Paul addresses this by redefining the locus of accountability: believers, including slaves, are ultimately serving Christ, not human authorities. This reframing gives dignity to their labour and assures them of a divine inheritance otherwise denied in Roman law (Col. 3:24). As Dunn (1996) observes, Paul's exhortation affirms that Christ's lordship relativizes all human hierarchies, enabling believers to endure unjust structures while finding meaning and hope in service to God. In contemporary application, this theological vision resonates with the call for academics to transcend the pursuit of titles or privileges and to view their intellectual labour as stewardship before God, echoing Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu's emphasis on research consistency grounded in intrinsic and transcendent motivation.

Literary Context of Col 3:23-24

Col 3:23-24 forms part of the larger *Haustafel* (household code) section (Col. 3:18-4:1), which organizes ethical exhortations for Christian households. These instructions reflect a Greco-Roman literary genre adapted by early Christians to address social relations in light of their faith (Balch, 1983). While conventional household codes reinforced existing hierarchies, Paul's version uniquely reorients relationships around the lordship of Christ. This is evident in the repeated emphasis on "the Lord" (Col. 3:18, 20, 22, 23, 24), which relativizes human authority structures. Positioned after Col 3:17, which affirms "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus," the exhortation to work wholeheartedly "as for the Lord" in verses 23-24 echoes and expands the earlier universal command (O'Brien, 1982). The literary flow thus situates everyday conduct, including menial labour, within the cosmic supremacy of Christ declared earlier in the epistle (Col. 1:15-20).

Parallel texts such as Ephesians 6:5-8 reinforce this interpretation, suggesting either Pauline authorship or a shared tradition among Pauline communities. In both cases, slaves are instructed to work sincerely, "as if serving the Lord, not men" (Eph. 6:7). The repetition across contexts highlights the early Christian conviction that Christ's lordship transforms even the most marginalized roles into opportunities for worship and service (Wright, 1986). Thus, the literary context of Col 3:23-24 underscores a radical theological shift: the Christian life, regardless of social status, is lived *coram Deo* – before the face of God.

Lexical Consideration Col 3:23-24

A closer look at the Greek text illuminates Paul's intent. The phrase *ho ean poiēte* (whatever you do) emphasizes universality, leaving no task outside the scope of Christian discipleship (Dunn, 1996). Even the smallest act falls under the call to wholehearted service. The expression *ek psychēs ergazesthe* (work from the soul) intensifies this point, urging believers to engage in labour with sincerity and inner devotion rather than mere external compliance (Barth & Blanke, 1994). The use of *psyche* (soul, life) suggests that work is to be animated by the deepest part of one's being, not just performed mechanically. The contrastive phrase *ouk anthropois* ("not for human masters") challenges the prevailing Roman honor/shame system by shifting the locus of accountability from earthly overseers to Christ. Most striking is the promise of *ten antapodosin tes kleronomias* ("the reward of the inheritance") in verse 24. For slaves, who were legally excluded from inheritance under Roman law, this language is nothing short of revolutionary. It assures them of a divine inheritance that transcends social and legal exclusion (O'Brien, 1982). The concluding affirmation, *to kurio Christo douleuete* ("It is the Lord Christ you are

serving”), brings the exhortation full circle, redefining both identity and purpose: believers, regardless of earthly status, are fundamentally servants of Christ.

Theological Significance of Col 3:23-24

The theological significance of Col 3:23-24 lies in its reorientation of human labour around the Lordship of Christ. In a world where slaves were dehumanized and denied dignity, Paul’s exhortation redefined their identity by affirming that their work ultimately served Christ rather than earthly masters. This Christological shift relativizes human hierarchies and invests even menial labour with divine purpose. As Dunn (1996) notes, Paul here “relocates the meaning of work within the framework of eschatological reward and Christ’s lordship” (p. 246). By promising an inheritance from the Lord (Col. 3:24), the text disrupts the Roman social order in which slaves could never legally inherit property (Barth & Blanke, 1994). Thus, the passage affirms that value and reward are not grounded in social privilege but in divine recognition, offering dignity and hope to marginalized believers.

Moreover, the call to work “from the soul” (*ek psuches*) reflects a theology of wholehearted devotion that transcends mere external compliance. O’Brien (1982) emphasizes that this points to the inner orientation of the believer toward God, where every action is to be carried out in sincerity and faith. In this sense, Col 3:23-24 integrates ethics and spirituality, reminding Christians that the daily rhythms of labour, study, and responsibility are acts of worship. The passage thus bridges the sacred and the secular, insisting that all vocations, whether manual, intellectual, or pastoral, fall under the sphere of Christ’s lordship.

Col 3:23-24 and Research Consistency Framework (RCF) of Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu

In contemporary academic contexts, Col 3:23-24 challenges the pursuit of titles and privileges divorced from meaningful intellectual labour. Just as Paul redirected slaves to view their work as service to Christ, so too does this passage call academics to reframe research not as a mere tool for promotion but as stewardship before God. This aligns closely with Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu’s Research Consistency Framework (RCF), which emphasizes intrinsic motivation, humility, and commitment to knowledge creation beyond the allure of academic titles (Kanu, 2021; 2022; Lebechi, 2014). By situating research within a Christ-centered framework, scholars are reminded that their ultimate accountability lies not in human applause but in divine approval.

Furthermore, the biblical promise of inheritance resonates with Kanu’s insistence on research as a vocation established in communal benefit rather than individual privilege. Just as Paul dignified the labour of slaves by promising them a share in

God's inheritance, RCF dignifies the academic enterprise by framing it as service to community and humanity. As Wright (1986) observes, the text lifts work from "the realm of the trivial to the sphere of the eternal," a theological vision that complements Kanu's Igwebuiké philosophy of communal responsibility. In this way, Col 3:23-24 not only supports but also deepens RCF's call for consistency, transforming research into an act of worship that unites intellectual rigour, cultural relevance, and divine purpose.

The Kanu Effect: Rethinking the Place of Promotion in the Academia

An academic title, such as doctor or professor, denotes positions of scholarly authority, teaching responsibility, and recognition for research accomplishments, but it is often misunderstood as an end in itself rather than a call to deeper responsibility. Errington (1998) notes that academic titles are sometimes seen as having little immediate practical significance, yet they carry enormous obligations that extend beyond decoration or prestige. Titles are institutional markers of teaching, research, and service contributions, and thus "to whom much is given, much is expected." As Harley (2007) explains, academic titles classify and honour individuals according to their research outputs, teaching roles, and scholarly impact. They serve as recognition of merit but also as a reminder that scholarship requires consistent productivity and ethical responsibility. Research itself, however, transcends the boundaries of academic institutions. As Ternenge and Sabo (2023) observe, research exists across professions and is often experienced as a challenging and even frustrating process for both students and academics. Yet, its essence lies in curiosity and disciplined inquiry, asking questions, observing reality, interrogating facts, and searching for solutions (Turabian, 2008; Tejumaiye, 2003; Lebechi, 2023). The value of academic titles, therefore, cannot be reduced to social recognition; they embody an obligation to pursue research as an ongoing process rather than as a stepping-stone to promotion. When research is pursued merely for extrinsic reward, such as career advancement, the intrinsic motivation to seek knowledge for its own sake is diminished (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Within the Nigerian context, many academics struggle to sustain research beyond promotion, due to structural limitations such as inadequate facilities, lack of funding, and weak research culture (Okoduwa et al., 2018). In response to all these, Anthony Ikechukwu Kanu's Research Consistency Framework (RCF) calls for a renewal of research attitudes through consistency, humility, and intrinsic motivation (Kanu, 2021; 2022; Azuwike 2023). Grounded in his Igwebuiké philosophy of complementarity and interdependence, the RCF emphasizes that scholarship must serve the common good rather than individual prestige (Kanu, 2015, 2018). It points to research as an act of stewardship, where consistency, humility, and service to community define scholarly integrity.

The Way Forward: Cultivating Viable Research Attitude

The cultivation of viable research attitudes among academics requires attention to both the personal dispositions of researchers and the collective vision that sustains a scholarly community. Research is never an isolated endeavour but a vocation that combines intellectual discipline with moral and communal responsibility. In this connection, the first hallmark of viable research attitudes is consistency and rigour. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argue that credibility in research depends on sustained engagement and methodological precision. Consistency is not merely a personal trait but a communal obligation: knowledge must be reliable so that it can be trusted and built upon by others. This aligns with the biblical call to diligence, where steady effort, carried out faithfully, becomes an offering to God. Rigour complements consistency by ensuring that research is thorough, systematic, and attentive to detail, thereby contributing lasting value to academic and social communities (Tracy, 2010).

A second dimension is critical and analytical engagement. Brookfield (2017) defines criticality as the disciplined practice of questioning assumptions and testing claims, while Patton (2015) highlights analysis as essential for interpreting complex realities. Within the Igwebuike framework, critical and analytical scholarship safeguards communal knowledge by preventing distortion and ensuring that knowledge passed on is coherent and trustworthy. This resonates with the biblical principle of discernment, captured in 1 Thess 5:21, which exhorts believers to “test everything; hold fast what is good.” Thus, viable researchers are those who can probe deeply into problems while weaving their insights into the broader fabric of collective understanding.

Equally important are ethical integrity and humility. Resnik (2020) identifies honesty, accountability, and respect for participants as non-negotiable principles of scientific practice. For Kanu, ethics extend beyond formal compliance to include a moral duty to uplift the community through knowledge (Kanu, 2019). Humility complements integrity by reminding researchers that no one has a monopoly on truth. In the spirit of Igwebuike, humility opens the door to shared wisdom, while Colossians 3:24 underscores that ultimate accountability lies not in human recognition but in service to Christ. This posture liberates academics from the vanity of titles and situates research as a calling that prioritizes truth and service over prestige.

Finally, viable research attitudes demand motivation and communal orientation. Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory underscores the role of intrinsic motivation in sustaining meaningful engagement. Self-motivated researchers demonstrate passion and resilience, qualities that not only enhance their

productivity but also inspire others. Yet motivation must be oriented toward the community, echoing Kanu's insistence that research address African challenges such as poverty, climate change, and cultural erosion (Kanu & Ndubisi, 2021; Dei, 2014; Muonwe & Lebechi, 2024). Effective organization and communication ensure that knowledge flows back into society in clear and accessible ways, thereby strengthening communal resilience. Here again, Colossians frames research as stewardship: the labour of academics, when offered wholeheartedly, becomes part of God's redemptive work in the world.

In sum, viable research attitudes emerge at the intersection of character, community, and stewardship. By cultivating consistency and rigour, engaging critically and analytically, embodying ethical integrity with humility, and sustaining intrinsic motivation directed toward communal needs, academics fulfill both their professional and spiritual vocations. Kanu's Igwebuike philosophy and the biblical witness of Col 3:23-24 converge to remind scholars that research is not about accumulating titles but about offering knowledge as service – reliable, ethical, and life-giving – for God and for humanity.

Conclusion

This study reinterprets Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu's Research Consistency Framework (RCF) through the theological insights of Colossians 3:23-24, proposing that research should not merely be seen as an institutional obligation but rather as a vocation aligned with divine stewardship and communal responsibility. It posits that the inconsistency crisis in Nigerian academia stems from a cultural obsession with titles and privilege, which detracts from the moral and spiritual essence of scholarship. This "addiction to privilege" in Nigerian society distorts genuine value systems, favouring appearance over merit. In this milieu, RCF emerges as a paradigm shift that redefines academic work as a pursuit driven by intrinsic motivation characterized by humility, ethical integrity, and a commitment to the common good.

The study incorporates Self-Determination Theory (SDT), illustrating how RCF fosters autonomy, competence, and relatedness, essential for sustained research productivity. The incorporation of Colossians 3:23-24 enriches this framework, adding a theological dimension that elevates scholarly work beyond mere human reward systems. The Pauline message to "work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men" recontextualizes research, transforming it from a strictly utilitarian endeavour into an act of worship, thus aligning academic diligence with divine purpose. Consequently, research consistency is seen not solely as a marker of professional excellence but also as an indication of faithfulness and accountability to God.

Additionally, the paper draws on Kanu's Igwebuiké philosophy of complementarity to argue that true scholarship is inherently communal. Knowledge creation is positioned as a collaborative process aimed at serving society and enhancing collective human flourishing. Therefore, fostering a conducive research attitude requires more than mere technical skills; it necessitates moral character, humility, and a vocation that integrates intellect with spirituality. In conclusion, the paper asserts that revitalizing academic culture in Nigeria hinges on reclaiming the sacred essence of work. While titles and promotions are acknowledged as valuable, they should not constitute the core of scholarly pursuits; rather, these are by-products of a more profound calling toward truth, service, and integrity. By embracing RCF and the teachings of Colossians 3:23-24, academics can transform research from a competitive field marked by privilege into a community oriented by vocation and purpose. This ethical and spiritual transformation provides a promising avenue toward developing a sustainable and enriching research culture for Africa and beyond.

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