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REWARD SYSTEMS AND LECTURERS' JOB PRODUCTIVITY IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN NIGERIA

Koliseyenum OGELEKA, Romina I. ASIYAI * and Dorah A. AKPOREHE

Department of Educational Management and Foundations, Faculty of Education, Delta State University Abraka, Nigeria
* Corresponding Author

ORCID Details
Romina I. ASIYAI: https://orcid.org/ 0000-0001-5259-5729

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the relationship between reward system and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria. Two research questions were raised and answered and two hypotheses were formulated and tested. The study employed a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 5,169 lecturers from universities in Delta and Edo States, from which a sample of 517 lecturers were selected. Proportional stratified sampling techniques was employed for the selection of the sample. Data was collected using Reward System Rating Scale (RSRS), and Lecturers' Job Productivity (LJP). Both face and content validity of the instrument were estimated. The internal consistency of the instruments was measured using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. Out of 517 questionnaires administered, 497 representing 96.1% of the total, were found valid and used for data analysis. The data collected were analysed using the coefficient of determination and Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis at 0.05 significance level. The findings of the study included the following: there is a strong positive significant relationship between non-monetary reward system, career development opportunities and lecturers' job productivity in public Universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended among others that University Management should strengthen the implementation of comprehensive reward systems by effectively integrating non-monetary rewards, and career development opportunities to enhance lecturers' job productivity.

Keywords: Career Development Opportunities, Job Productivity, Lecturers, Non-Monetary Reward.

1 INTRODUCTION

Universities all over the world, are centres for the production of high-level manpower to man the development agenda of nations. These institutions serve as forums where critical thinking is cultivated, cultural diversity is celebrated, and scientific advancements are pursued, with each of these functions contributing to societal progress and the betterment of humanity. Moreover, the university system is essential in equipping individuals with the expertise needed to address contemporary societal issues, thereby supporting sustainable development and improving the quality of life for broader communities. In fulfilling these goals, universities not only provide education but also shape the intellectual foundations that fuel national innovation and economic growth. Central to achieving the objectives of universities are the lecturers, who play a pivotal role as teachers, researchers, and mentors. Lecturers are responsible for delivering subject-specific

knowledge, fostering critical thinking, and guiding students through academic and professional development. Through teaching, they enable students to acquire the skills necessary for success in their careers and personal lives. However, their influence extends beyond mere content delivery, as they inspire intellectual curiosity and encourage ethical and independent thought (Nwagwu & Ekpenyong, 2020).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Lecturers play very important roles towards the accomplishment of the goals and objectives of the university which are teaching, research and community service and the development of human capital. Their productivity is therefore a critical determinant of quality teaching, research, preparation of graduates for national development and the general effectiveness of higher education institutions. Hence public universities are expected to create working conditions that encourage lecturers to perform their academic responsibilities effectively and make meaningful contributions to the development of their institution. One of the strategies employed by the university management to boost the productivity of teaching and non-teaching staff is the provision of appropriate reward systems.

Non-monetary rewards is the form of recognition benefits provided to staff besides financial rewards. They include housing or accommodation, recognition for outstanding performance, and recommendation for conference attendance. This paper investigated non-monetary and career development opportunities and lecturers' productivity in universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria.

1.2 Research Questions

- What is the relationship between the non-monetary reward system and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria?
- What is the relationship between the career development opportunities and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria?

1.3 Hypotheses

- There is no significant relationship between the non-monetary reward system and lecturers' job productivity in public Universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria
- There is no significant relationship between the career development opportunities and lecturers' job productivity in public Universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Reward systems are structured mechanisms designed to motivate and recognize individuals or groups within an organization for their efforts, performance, or achievements. They serve as a bridge between organizational goals and employee behavior, aligning individual contributions with broader objectives. These systems can include financial rewards, such as salaries, bonuses, and benefits, as well as non-financial rewards, such as recognition, career development opportunities, and intrinsic satisfaction from meaningful work. Reward systems are integral to organizational success because they influence employee motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity (Mills et al., 2023). In the context of public universities, reward systems play a pivotal role in shaping lecturers' commitment, morale, and performance, particularly in challenging environments where resources and recognition are often limited.

A comprehensive reward system is typically categorized into extrinsic and intrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards refer to tangible incentives that employees receive, such as pay raises, bonuses, and allowances. These rewards fulfil basic needs and act as direct motivators for performance improvement. For lecturers in public universities, extrinsic rewards may include research grants, promotions, or allowances tied to teaching and administrative roles. Conversely, intrinsic rewards are intangible and relate to the emotional and psychological satisfaction derived from the job itself. This includes a sense of accomplishment, recognition for achievements, and opportunities for professional growth (Zhao & Jiang, 2022). The interplay between these two types of rewards is essential in designing systems that effectively motivate diverse groups of employees.

Non-monetary rewards also play a significant role in influencing employee behavior. These rewards are particularly important in public sector organizations, such as universities, where financial incentives may be limited due to budget constraints. Non-monetary rewards can include flexible work schedules, opportunities for professional development, and recognition through awards or public acknowledgment. For instance, a lecturer who receives a "Best Researcher of the Year" award not only feels valued but also gains professional credibility, which can enhance motivation and commitment (Tian & Zhang, 2020). Non-monetary rewards are also effective in fostering a positive work environment, which contributes to long-term employee engagement and retention.

Career development opportunities, as a component of reward systems, address employees' aspirations for professional growth and advancement. In the academic context, these opportunities may include access to training programmes, mentorship, conference funding, and pathways for promotion. Providing avenues for career development signals to employees that the organization values their growth and is invested in their future. This, in turn, builds loyalty and motivates individuals to contribute more meaningfully to the institution's success. Recent studies emphasize the importance of career development in enhancing employee satisfaction and productivity. For example, a study by Ding and Song (2022) found that career development opportunities significantly influenced lecturers' engagement and job performance in Chinese universities.

The effectiveness of a reward system is influenced by its alignment with employees' needs and expectations.

2.1 Career Development Opportunities in Public Universities

Career development opportunities in public universities play a significant role in shaping the academic careers of faculty members. These opportunities not only enhance lecturers' professional growth but also contribute to improved job satisfaction, retention, and overall productivity. Career development is a broad concept that includes a variety of professional growth opportunities such as training programmes, mentorship, career counseling, access to academic resources, opportunities for research collaboration, academic advancement, and leadership training. The level of career development opportunities provided by universities influences how faculty members perceive their professional lives and whether they feel motivated to remain in academia or seek employment elsewhere. In the context of public universities, where funding may be limited and resources stretched thin, the availability and quality of these opportunities can vary significantly, with implications for the academic staff's engagement and long-term commitment to their institutions.

Empirical studies on career development opportunities in public universities have highlighted both the importance of these opportunities and the disparities that exist across different institutions and geographical regions. Research in the last five years has emphasized the critical role career development plays in faculty retention, job satisfaction, and professional engagement. One such study by Ojo et al. (2022) explored the role of career development programmes in Nigerian public universities. The study found that faculty members who had access to structured career development programmes, including mentorship, research support, and training in emerging academic fields, reported higher levels of job satisfaction and were more likely to stay in their current academic roles. The study also pointed out that universities that invested in the professional development of their staff saw improved performance in research outputs, teaching effectiveness, and overall academic standing.

Similarly, a study by Alabi and Olayemi (2021) focused on the relationship between career development opportunities and lecturers' job commitment in Nigerian public universities. The researchers found that the provision of career development opportunities, such as attending academic conferences, engaging in collaborative research projects, and having access to professional networks, was significantly associated with higher levels of job commitment. The study also highlighted the role of university leadership in fostering an environment where career development opportunities were readily available and accessible to all faculty members. The research concluded that institutions that offered such opportunities were more likely to retain their academic staff and enhance their institutional reputation.

In a study conducted by Ogunyemi and Folarin (2023), the authors investigated the impact of career development opportunities on the academic performance of lecturers in public universities in Nigeria. The study showed that lecturers who had access to regular professional development activities, such as workshops, seminars, and research grants, were more likely to engage in innovative teaching methods and produce high-quality research outputs. The researchers suggested that universities could significantly enhance lecturers' academic performance by providing continuous career development programmes, particularly those that focus on skill enhancement and academic leadership.

The importance of career development opportunities in supporting academic staff is not limited to Nigeria. A study by Lim and Tan (2021) explored the role of career development opportunities in Malaysian public universities, specifically focusing on faculty members' perceptions of the availability and effectiveness of such programmes. The study found that faculty members who perceived their universities as providing adequate opportunities for career growth were more satisfied with their jobs and more committed to their roles. Furthermore, faculty members who were provided with clear pathways for career advancement and supported in their pursuit of higher qualifications and research opportunities were more likely to perform at a higher level. This finding underscores the global relevance of career development as a critical factor in faculty retention and academic productivity.

Career development opportunities also play a crucial role in motivating early-career academics. A study by Udo et al. (2022) examined the experiences of junior lecturers in Nigerian public universities and found that access to career development resources, such as mentorship, funding for research, and guidance on teaching strategies, was essential

for their professional growth. The study revealed that junior faculty who were supported through career development programmes experienced greater satisfaction and a higher likelihood of staying in academia. This aligns with the findings of Ahmed et al. (2020), who investigated the role of career mentorship in the career progression of lecturers in Kenyan public universities. They found that mentorship, as a form of career development, was crucial for the professional growth of early-career academics, helping them navigate the challenges of academia and enhancing their chances of success.

Despite the widespread acknowledgment of the importance of career development opportunities, many public universities, particularly those in developing countries, face challenges in providing these opportunities. Financial constraints, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and inadequate institutional policies often limit the scope and availability of career development programmes for faculty members. A study by Ajayi et al. (2021) explored the barriers to career development in Nigerian public universities and found that inadequate funding and poor institutional support were the primary obstacles preventing lecturers from fully benefiting from career development initiatives. The researchers noted that while some universities did provide training programmes and research opportunities, these were often limited in scope and failed to reach all faculty members equally.

Moreover, research conducted by Enu and Osei (2022) highlighted that the unequal distribution of career development opportunities within public universities led to disparities in faculty members' professional growth. They argued that lecturers in senior positions or those with more established academic networks were more likely to access career development resources, leaving junior faculty members at a disadvantage. This inequality in access to career development opportunities, according to the study, could lead to feelings of frustration, low job satisfaction, and reduced academic performance among less-experienced lecturers.

The role of leadership in facilitating career development opportunities has also been extensively studied. In line with these findings, a study by Eze et al. (2020) focused on the role of career development programmes in the retention of faculty members in Nigerian universities. The research found that faculty members who had access to career advancement opportunities, including opportunities to attend international conferences, collaborate on research, and engage in teaching development programmes, were more likely to remain at their institutions. The study also indicated that universities that prioritized faculty development through clear career pathways and support systems experienced lower turnover rates and higher levels of faculty engagement.

One critical aspect of career development opportunities is the alignment of such programmes with the lecturers' personal and professional goals. A study by Okonkwo et al. (2021) explored the link between career development programmes and lecturers' career aspirations in Nigerian universities. The research found that when career development programmes were tailored to meet individual lecturers' goals, such as advancing in academia or gaining expertise in specific fields, lecturers were more likely to participate and benefit from these programmes. The study emphasized the need for universities to offer personalized career development opportunities that align with the career aspirations of individual faculty members.

In the context of public universities, non-monetary rewards are often seen as a cost-effective means of enhancing lecturers' job satisfaction and productivity. According to Okoye and Okoro (2023), non-monetary rewards, such as public recognition and career advancement opportunities, contribute significantly to lecturers' motivation and job performance. The authors argue that when lecturers feel valued and recognized for their contributions, such as their research, teaching, and mentoring efforts, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of productivity. Recognition, in particular, is a powerful motivator, as it addresses the need for social esteem and professional acknowledgment that many lecturers seek in their careers. Public recognition of achievements through awards or announcements at academic gatherings can create a positive feedback loop that motivates lecturers to continue contributing to the academic mission of the university.

Furthermore, a study by Kanu and Nwachukwu (2023) examined how universities could enhance their career development programmes to better support faculty members. The study concluded that universities should invest in comprehensive career development programmes that include opportunities for teaching and research skill enhancement, leadership training, and academic networking. The researchers argued that career development should be an ongoing process, with universities providing continuous support to their faculty members throughout their careers, not just at the beginning stages.

3 METHODOLOGY

The study employed correlation research design. The population comprised academic staff in public universities in the Delta and Edo States region of Nigeria, with a total population of 5,169 lecturers from universities in Delta and Edo States. A sample of 518 lecturers were selected from Delta and Edo States. The sample size for this study was determined

using the Krejcie & Morgan (1970) formula and it gave 377. To account for a potential 10% attrition rate, the sample size was increased by 10%, resulting in a final sample of 517 respondents. Proportional stratified sampling used to ensure that the sample mirrors the population distribution across the universities.

Data for the study was collected using tools tagged Non-Monetary Reward System Rating Scale (NMRSRS) and Career Development Opportunities Rating Scale (CDORS). Each contained 20 items that were structured on a four-point scale SD: Strongly Disagree (1); D: Disagree (2); A: Agree (3); SA: Strongly Agree (4). To ensure the face and content validities of the instrument, expert opinions were sought from the Department of Educational Management and Foundations, and Measurement and Evaluation, Delta State University Abraka, Nigeria. Cronbach's alpha reliability method was employed for the reliability of the instrument to ensure the internal consistency. Reliability coefficient of 0.84 and 0.80 were computed for NMRSRS and CDORS.

The researchers and four research assistants, who were coached, administered the questionnaire. Prior to the administration, permission was obtained from the university authorities, and informed consent sought from the respondents. The participants were ensured anonymity and confidentiality with clear instructions provided to encourage accurate responses. A total of 517 copies of questionnaire was administered, but 497, representing 96.1% of the total, were retrieved valid and used for data analysis. Pearson's product-moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between performance appraisal, and job productivity. The hypotheses were tested at o.o5 alpha level.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Answering Research Question 1

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Coefficient of Determination of non-monetary reward system and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Nigeria

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	r^2	r^2 %	Decision
Non-Monetary Reward System	497	2.94	0.19	0.529	0.280	28	Moderate Positive Relationship
Lecturers' Job Productivity	497	2.90	0.75				

Data in Table 1 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the coefficient of determination of the relationship between the non-monetary reward system and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Nigeria. The computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) is 0.529, while the coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.280. The coefficient of determination indicates that approximately 28% of the variation in lecturers' job productivity can be explained by the non-monetary reward system. Thus, it is concluded that relationship between the non-monetary reward system and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Nigeria is a moderate positive relationship.

4.2 Answering Research Question 2

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Coefficient of Determination of career development opportunities and lecturers' productivity

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	r^2	r^2 %	Decision
Career Development Opportunities	497	2.92	0.30	0.693	0.480	48	Strong Positive relationship
Lecturers' Job Productivity	497	2.90	0.75				

Data in Table 2 shows the Pearson Product Moment Correlation and the coefficient of determination of the relationship between career development opportunities and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Nigeria. The computed Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient (r) is 0.693, while the coefficient of determination (r^2) is 0.480. The coefficient of determination indicates that approximately 48% of the variation in lecturers' job productivity can be explained by career development opportunities. Thus, it is concluded that the relationship between career development opportunities and lecturers' job productivity in public universities Nigeria is a strong positive relationship.

4.3 Hypotheses Testing

4.3.1 Hypothesis 1

Table 3: Pearson Correlation of the relationship between non-monetary reward system and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Nigeria

		Non-Monetary Reward System	Lecturers' Job Productivity
Non-Monetary Reward System	Pearson Correlation	1	0.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	497	497
Lecturers' Job Productivity	Pearson Correlation	0.529**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	497	497

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Data in Table 3 shows a Pearson Correlation analysis of the relationship between non-monetary reward system and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Nigeria (r = 0.529, alpha level = 0.05). This is determined by comparing the p-value to the alpha level. The p-value of 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between non-monetary reward system and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Nigeria.

4.3.2 Hypothesis Two

Table 4: Pearson Correlation analysis of the relationship between the career development opportunities and lecturers' job productivity in public Universities in Nigeria

		Career Development Opportunities	Lecturers' Job Productivity
Career Development Opportunities	Pearson Correlation	1	0.693**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000
	N	497	497
Lecturers' Job Productivity	Pearson Correlation	0.693**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	497	497

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Data in Table 4 shows a Pearson Correlation analysis of the relationship between career development opportunities and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria (r = 0.693, alpha level = 0.05). This is determined by comparing the p-value to the alpha level. The p-value of 0.000 is less than the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between career development opportunities and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Nigeria.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Non-Monetary Reward System and Lecturers' Job Productivity in Public Universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria

The first research finding revealed a moderate and statistically significant relationship between non-monetary reward system and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria. This suggests that non-financial incentives meaningfully enhance lecturers' effectiveness, though not as strongly as major financial motivators in some contexts. A plausible explanation for this result is that non-monetary rewards—such as formal recognition, award of excellence, professional development opportunities, conference sponsorship, flexible work arrangements, and enhanced academic autonomy—satisfy lecturers' psychological and professional needs. When lecturers feel respected, valued, and supported in their career growth, they are more inclined to demonstrate higher levels of commitment to teaching, research, and institutional service. Another reason may be that non-monetary rewards strengthen intrinsic motivation and professional identity among academic staff. Unlike purely financial incentives, recognition-based rewards often foster long-term loyalty, morale, and emotional attachment to the institution. This can translate into sustained improvements in productivity, hence the observed moderate relationship. Furthermore, in public universities where financial resources may be constrained, non-monetary rewards provide a practical and cost-effective strategy for motivating lecturers. Opportunities such as funded conference attendance, leadership roles, and public acknowledgment of achievements can significantly enhance job enthusiasm and scholarly engagement even in the absence of large monetary benefits. This finding is in line with Chimwene and Wanjere (2020) who found that universities that institutionalize recognition and career development schemes experience noticeable gains in academic staff productivity. This finding is consistent with the study of Azeez and Yara (2022) who reported that recognition and professional development opportunities moderately improve lecturers' performance in Nigerian Universities This finding is in line with Okoye and Okoro (2023) who showed that non-monetary rewards, such as public recognition and career advancement opportunities, contribute significantly to lecturers' motivation and job performance.

5.2 Career Development Opportunities and Lecturers' Job Productivity in Public Universities in Delta and Edo States

The second research finding revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between career development opportunities and lecturers' job productivity in public universities in Delta and Edo States, Nigeria. This indicates that lecturers who are provided with structured opportunities for professional growth tend to demonstrate higher levels of teaching effectiveness, research output, and overall academic performance. A likely reason for this finding is that career development opportunities such as sponsorship for higher degrees, conference attendance, research training, sabbatical programmes, and promotion pathways enhance lecturers' competencies and professional confidence. When universities invest in the continuous development of their academic staff, lecturers acquire new knowledge, skills, and networks that directly improve their productivity. Another explanation may be that visible career advancement prospects increase lecturers' motivation and long-term commitment to their institutions. When academic staff perceive clear pathways for growth and promotion, they are more willing to exert additional effort in research, publication, and quality teaching in order to progress professionally. This sense of progression reduces stagnation and stimulates goal-oriented behaviour. Furthermore, career development opportunities may foster innovation and scholarly engagement by exposing lecturers to current trends, collaborative research environments, and global best practices. Such exposure often translates into improved instructional delivery and increased research visibility, thereby strengthening overall job productivity. This finding agrees with Alabi and Olayemi (2021), who reported that continuous professional development significantly enhances academic staff performance in Nigerian universities. This finding also agrees with Asiyai (2016), supporting teachers through provision of opportunities for continuous professional development, such as in-service training through workshops, seminars, and conferences, empowered them for better engagement in high-quality teaching and other institutional effectiveness activities. Ladipo, *et al.,* (2022) who found that lecturers who benefit from structured career growth programmes demonstrate higher research productivity and instructional quality. In addition, Tanimu, Andesimbapae, and Tanko (2024) who showed that that institutions that prioritize staff development experience substantial improvements in academic output and institutional effectiveness.

6 CONCLUSION

The study concluded that non-monetary rewards including career development opportunities, performance-based rewards, and intrinsic rewards, are positively and significantly related to lecturers' job productivity.

Recommendation

The study therefore recommended that:

- University Governing Councils and Management should strengthen the implementation of comprehensive reward systems by effectively integrating performance-based, intrinsic, extrinsic, non-monetary rewards, and career development opportunities to enhance lecturers' job productivity.
- Federal and State Ministries of Education, in collaboration with University Management, should promote and fund career development opportunities such as training, workshops, conferences, and research grants, given their strong influence on lecturers' job productivity.
- University Management and Academic Boards should enhance non-monetary reward systems by promoting recognition schemes, fair promotion processes, and increased lecturer participation in decision-making.

STATEMENTS ON COMPLIANCE WITH ETHICAL STANDARDS

Acknowledgment

The authors declare that ethical standards were observed in the conduct of this research. Permission was sought from the principals of all the secondary schools used for this research.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest regarding this manuscript.

Statement of informed consent

Informed consent was sought from participants and research assistant volunteered to assist with collection of data before they were recruited and coached.

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