INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (IJPADS)

Volume: 2 | Issue: 4 | Pages: 89-100 **Date:** December, 2025

Open Access Journal. Accessible online via https://ijpads.com

Reward System and Employee Service Delivery in Nigeria Public Sector Organisations: Issues and Prospects

ONYEIZUGBE IFEYINWA CHINYERE
Ifyjesus2024@gmail.com

NWABUNWANNE CHIAMAKA GLORIA
Gloamy4life@gmail.com

ONWUASOIGWE NDIDIAMAKA D.
emeraldndidiamaka@gmail.com

EWUZIE IKEM SURPLUS
ikemsurplus@gmail.com

Department of Public Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Abstract

Reward systems remain one of the most critical instruments for motivating employees and enhancing organisational performance, particularly in public sector organisations where service delivery directly affects citizens' welfare. In Nigeria, persistent challenges such as poor service quality, low employee morale, corruption, and inefficiency have drawn attention to the adequacy of existing reward structures. The objective of this paper, therefore, is to determine the effect of reward system on employee service delivery in Nigerian public sector organisations. Drawing from theoretical perspectives, empirical studies, and recent policy reforms, it examines the nature of reward practices in Nigeria, identifies key issues affecting their effectiveness, and explores prospects for reform aimed at improving service delivery outcomes. Data for this study were elicited from secondary sources. Findings show that persistent weaknesses in reward administration have contributed to poor service outcomes, low morale, and public dissatisfaction.

The study concludes that policymakers should prioritise regular review of salary structures, strengthen performance appraisal mechanisms, reduce political interference in reward administration, promote a balanced mix of financial and non-financial rewards, and invest in continuous training and development of public servants.

Keywords: Reward System, Employee Service Delivery, Public Sector, Organisations

Introduction

Public sector organisations constitute the backbone of governance and socio-economic development in Nigeria. They are entrusted with the responsibility of providing essential services such as education, healthcare, security, infrastructure, housing, transportation, and social welfare. According to Nwafor, Ojiako, Okonkwo and Onyeulo, (2023), effective public service delivery constitutes one of the most crucial roles of a responsible government in any given political entity. The quality of these services largely determines citizens' perception of government effectiveness and legitimacy. However, Nigeria's public sector has, over the years, been characterised by persistent challenges including inefficiency, bureaucratic delays, corruption, weak accountability mechanisms, and declining service standards. Scholars and policy analysts have consistently linked these challenges to weaknesses in human resource management practices, particularly the structure and administration of reward systems.

A reward system represents a structured mechanism through which organisations compensate, motivate, and recognise employees for their contributions. According to Nwafor, Ojiako and Umetiti (2024), performance recognition, as a form of reward, has positive impact on the quality of employee output in the Nigerian public service. In the Nigerian public sector, reward systems are shaped by civil service rules, government wage policies, political considerations, and fiscal constraints. While

these systems are designed to ensure equity, stability, and uniformity, they often fail to sufficiently motivate employees or encourage high performance and innovation. Consequently, employee morale remains low in many public institutions, with negative implications for service delivery.

However, a number of factors are largely responsible for the worrisome level of inefficiency in the Nigerian public service. These include, but not restricted to: poor working environments, low motivation, inadequate remuneration, lack of adequate training for employees and other irregularities associated with recruitment processes. (Nwafor, Ojiako, Okonkwo and Onyeulo, 2023). This paper therefore presents a comprehensive discussion of reward systems and employee service delivery in Nigerian public sector organisations, focusing on conceptual issues, theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, challenges, and future prospects.

Conceptual Review

Reward System

The concept of reward system has attracted extensive attention in human resource management and public administration literature. Armstrong (2021) defines a reward system as the combination of financial and non-financial rewards provided to employees in exchange for their services, aimed at motivating performance and reinforcing organisational values. Milkovich, Newman, and Gerhart (2022) describe reward systems as all forms of financial returns, tangible services, and benefits that employee receive as part of an employment relationship.

From a public administration perspective, reward systems are viewed as policy instruments through which governments influence employee behaviour, promote efficiency, and reinforce accountability. Dessler (2020) argues that effective reward systems must be perceived as fair, transparent,

and aligned with clearly defined performance outcomes. In the Nigerian public sector, however, reward systems are often criticised for being rigid, uniform, and weakly linked to individual or organisational performance. This rigidity limits their motivational capacity and reduces their effectiveness as tools for improving service delivery.

Scholars have conceptualised reward systems from different perspectives. Armstrong (2021) views reward systems as strategic tools that integrate pay, benefits, recognition, and development opportunities to align employee behaviour with organisational goals. Torrington, Hall, Taylor, and Atkinson (2020) define reward systems as mechanisms for reinforcing desired employee behaviour and discouraging undesirable practices. Ogunyemi and Akinwale (2021) conceptualise reward systems as motivational frameworks that influence employee commitment, job satisfaction, and service outcomes in public organisations.

Despite differences in emphasis, these definitions converge on the idea that reward systems go beyond salary payments. They encompass psychological, social, and professional incentives that shape employee attitudes, behaviour, and performance. In the public sector, where intrinsic motivation to serve the public interest is often emphasised, the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards becomes particularly significant.

Components and Types of Reward Systems

Reward systems are commonly classified into financial and non-financial rewards. Financial rewards include basic salaries, wages, bonuses, pensions, gratuities, and various allowances such as housing, transport, medical, and duty tour allowances. In Nigeria's public sector, financial rewards are largely determined through consolidated salary structures approved by government, with periodic wage reviews influenced by labour negotiations and economic conditions.

Non-financial rewards include promotion, recognition, training and development opportunities, job security, status, autonomy, meaningful work, and a supportive work environment. According to Pfeffer (2021), non-financial rewards often have stronger and more sustainable motivational effects than monetary incentives, particularly in organisations where financial resources are limited. In the Nigerian public sector, non-financial rewards are especially important given fiscal constraints and rising inflation, which erode the real value of wages.

Employee Service Delivery

Employee service delivery refers to the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness with which public servants provide services to citizens. The World Bank (2022) defines service delivery as the tangible outcomes of government actions that directly affect the welfare of individuals and communities. In the Nigerian context, service delivery is a key indicator of governance quality, public sector performance, and development effectiveness.

Service delivery goes beyond the mere provision of services; it encompasses accessibility, responsiveness, equity, transparency, professionalism, and citizen satisfaction. Poor service delivery undermines public trust in government institutions, weakens state legitimacy, and hampers socio-economic development. Improving service delivery therefore remains a central objective of public sector reform in Nigeria.

Dimensions of Service Delivery in Public Sector Organisations

Service delivery in public organisations is multidimensional. Efficiency refers to the optimal use of resources in producing services, while effectiveness relates to the extent to which services achieve intended objectives. Equity emphasises fairness and inclusiveness in access to public services, while accountability and transparency focus on

answerability and openness in service provision. Responsiveness relates to the timeliness and appropriateness of services in meeting citizens' needs, while citizen satisfaction reflects public perception of service quality.

Effective reward systems can reinforce these dimensions by motivating employees to perform their duties professionally, ethically, and efficiently. When public servants perceive rewards as fair and performance-oriented, they are more likely to demonstrate commitment and responsiveness in service delivery.

Theoretical Perspectives Linking Reward Systems and Service Delivery

Several theories provide insights into the relationship between reward systems and employee service delivery. Expectancy Theory suggests that employees are motivated when they believe their effort will lead to performance and valued rewards. Equity Theory emphasises fairness in reward distribution as a determinant of motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment. Public Service Motivation Theory argues that public servants are driven by a desire to serve the public interest, but that appropriate extrinsic rewards can reinforce this intrinsic motivation rather than crowd it out (Perry & Hondeghem, 2020).

These theories collectively suggest that reward systems, when properly designed and implemented, can significantly influence employee behaviour and service outcomes in the public sector.

Reward Systems and Employee Motivation in Nigeria

Motivation is a critical determinant of employee performance and service delivery. Empirical studies in Nigeria reveal that inadequate reward systems contribute to low morale, absenteeism, high turnover intentions, and reduced organisational commitment

among public servants. Ogunyemi and Akinwale (2021) found that fair and transparent reward practices significantly enhance job satisfaction and service delivery outcomes in the Nigerian civil service.

Conversely, delayed salary payments, poor promotion prospects, and perceived inequities in reward distribution have been shown to demotivate employees and reduce their willingness to go beyond minimum job requirements. These motivational challenges have direct implications for service quality and efficiency.

Reward Practices in the Nigerian Public Sector

Nigeria's public sector reward system is characterised by centralised wage determination, uniform pay structures, extensive use of allowances, strong job security, and limited performance-based incentives. While this system promotes equity and stability, it often discourages innovation, excellence, and accountability (Bureau of Public Service Reforms, 2022). Performance appraisal systems are frequently weak or poorly implemented, making it difficult to link rewards to measurable outcomes.

Issues and Challenges of Reward Systems in Nigeria

Major challenges confronting reward systems in the Nigerian public sector include low real wages due to inflation, delayed salary payments, inequitable reward distribution across sectors and cadres, weak performance appraisal mechanisms, political interference in promotions and appointments, and limited recognition of outstanding performance. These challenges undermine employee motivation, encourage rent-seeking behaviour, and negatively affect service delivery.

Reward Systems and Corruption

It is very difficult to precisely define corruption. Maduabum (2008) believes that the term corruption comes from the Latin

word 'Rumpere', (to break), implying that in corruption something is broken. The thing that is broken could be moral or social code of conduct but more often than not, an administrative rule, and the official who breaks the rule, desires some recognizable benefits for himself, his family, friends, tribe, party or some other relevant groups. Essentially, the moral code is broken against general good, for narrow sectional or private interest. Maduabum, (2008), defines corruption as a serious misconduct and by virtue of Section 2 of the Anti-Corruption Law, the act includes, bribery, fraud, and other related offences. These misconducts or acts are generally to benefit an individual or his group at the detriment of the significant others. Generally, corruption involves, bribery, use of compension to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust. For instance, unscrupulous and short-sighted parents demand high marks for their wards by paying bribes. According to Obikeze, Abba and Ojiako (2024), the malady known as corruption is by no means a recent phenomenon in the human society. Evidently, the concept ‘corruption’ is not an African word indicating that it is a universal concept.

Obikeze, Abba and Ojiako (2024), further added that from the wide spread of corruption, it is certain that corruption is not resident in any one country, or region. Equally important is that there are many dimensions of corruption. In India, the 'Prevention Corruption Act' identified the following as the areas that involve corruption: They are criminal misconduct by public servants in the discharge of official duty which among others may include habitual acceptance of illegal gratification for themselves or for any other person. "Misappropriation or conversion of property entrusted to him as a public servant or allowing another person to do so, acts of obtaining pecuniary advantage for himself or for any other person, habitual taking of illegal gratification to influence a public servant and

possession of wealth disproportionate to the known source of income of the individual". In other words, there are many dimensions to corruption. Inadequate and poorly administered reward systems have been linked to corruption and unethical behaviour in the public sector. Transparency International (2023) notes that poorly remunerated and demotivated public servants are more susceptible to bribery and other forms of corruption. Such practices undermine service delivery, distort resource allocation, and erode public trust in government institutions.

Role of Non-Financial Rewards in Enhancing Service Delivery

Non-financial rewards such as recognition, training opportunities, career advancement, participatory decision-making, and supportive leadership play a significant role in motivating public servants. Employees who feel valued and recognised are more committed to organisational goals and more willing to deliver quality services (Pfeffer, 2021). Strengthening non-financial rewards is therefore essential for improving service delivery in Nigeria's public sector.

Public Sector Reforms and Reward Systems in Nigeria

Nigeria has implemented several reforms aimed at improving reward systems and service delivery, including public service reforms, payroll digitalisation, monetisation of fringe benefits, and the introduction of SERVICOM. While these reforms have recorded some successes, implementation challenges persist, limiting their overall impact (Bureau of Public Service Reforms, 2022).

SERVICOM and Employee Service Delivery

SERVICOM (Service Compact with All Nigerians) was introduced to promote citizen-centered service delivery by setting service standards and accountability

mechanisms across public institutions. Effective reward systems are necessary to motivate employees to comply with SERVICOM principles and deliver services that meet citizens' expectations.

Empirical Evidence on Reward Systems and Service Delivery

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between effective reward systems and employee performance in the Nigerian public sector (Adebayo & Idowu, 2020). However, the strength of this relationship depends on the extent to which rewards are transparent, equitable, and clearly linked to performance outcomes.

Prospects for Reward System Reform in Nigeria

Prospects for reform include the introduction of performance-based pay, improved transparency in reward administration, greater emphasis on non-financial incentives, strengthening performance appraisal systems, and the use of digital technologies to manage payroll and human resource data. These reforms hold significant potential for improving employee motivation and service delivery.

Conclusion

Reward systems are central to employee motivation and service delivery in Nigerian public sector organisations. Persistent weaknesses in reward administration have contributed to poor service outcomes, low morale, and public dissatisfaction. Addressing these challenges through comprehensive reform and effective implementation will enhance efficiency, professionalism, and public trust in Nigeria's public sector.

Recommendations

Reforming reward systems has important implications for governance, accountability, and sustainable development. Policymakers should prioritise regular review of salary structures, strengthen performance appraisal

mechanisms, reduce political interference in reward administration, promote a balanced mix of financial and non-financial rewards, and invest in continuous training and development of public servants.

References

Adebayo, O. I., & Idowu, S. O. (2020). Reward system and employee performance in the Nigerian public sector. Journal of Public Administration and Governance, 10(2), 45–60.

Armstrong, M. (2021). Armstrong's handbook of reward management practice (14th ed.). Kogan Page.

Bureau of Public Service Reforms. (2022). National strategy for public service reform in Nigeria. Federal Government of Nigeria.

Dessler, G. (2020). Human resource management (16th ed.). Pearson Education.

Maduabum, C. (2008). The Mechanics of Public Administration in Nigeria, Lagos, Concept Publications Limited. Pp. 118, 130, 484-487, 486

Milkovich, G. T., Newman, J. M., & Gerhart, B. (2022). Compensation (14th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Nwafor, A. E., & Ojiako, C. I., Okonkwo, E.R, and Onyeulo, F.L, (2023). Administrative weakness, politics of recruitment and impediments to effective service delivery in the Nigerian public sector: The dilemma of human resource managers. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews (IJRPR)*. Vol 4, no 2, pp 216-221, February 2023. www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Nwafor, A.E., Ojiako, C.I and Umetiti, B.C (2024). Organizational Reward Policy and Employee Productivity in Anambra State Civil Service. *Journal of the Management Sciences*, *60*(3), 68 - 83. https://journals.unizik.edu.ng/jfms/article/view/3758

Obikeze, O.S.A., Abba, U.E., and Ojiako, C.I, (2024), Political Corruption and Sustainability of Democracy in Nigeria: A Critical Evaluation. *International Journal of Public Administration and Development Studies, Vol. 1(2), December, 2024. Pp. 1 - 23.* Open Access Journal. Accessible online via https://ijpads.com

Ogunyemi, K., & Akinwale, O. (2021). Motivation, rewards and service delivery in Nigeria's civil service. International Journal of Public Sector Management, 34(4), 389–404.

Perry, J. L., & Hondeghem, A. (2020). Motivation in public management: The call of public service. Oxford University Press.

Pfeffer, J. (2021). Dying for a paycheck. Harper Business.

Transparency International. (2023). Corruption perceptions index 2023. Transparency International.

World Bank. (2022). World development report 2022: Governance for service delivery. World Bank Publications.