



**EFFECT OF ORGANIZATIONAL REWARDS SYSTEM ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A
STUDY OF SELECTED MINISTRIES OF THE EBONYI STATE CIVIL SERVICE**

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Abstract

This study examines the effect of reward systems on employee performance in selected ministries of Ebonyi State Civil Service. Reward systems, encompassing both financial and non-financial incentives, play a critical role in motivating employees and enhancing productivity. The study adopts a descriptive survey research design and draws data from civil servants across selected ministries. Theoretical anchorage is based on Equity Theory and Expectancy Theory, which explain how perceived fairness and expected outcomes influence employee motivation. Findings from recent empirical studies indicate that effective reward systems—such as salaries, promotions, recognition, and career development—significantly improve employee performance, commitment, and service delivery. The study concludes that a well-structured reward system enhances efficiency in public sector organizations. It recommends that government ministries should implement transparent, equitable, and performance-based reward systems to improve productivity and service delivery.

Keywords: *Civil Service, Performance, Organizational Rewards, Salary, Promotion.*

Introduction

Organizational rewards serve as motivation that spur workers towards commitment to the organizational goals and objectives and improved employee performance. Organizational rewards refer to the totality of financial and non-financial returns that employees receive in exchange for their contributions to organizational goals. Rewards are broadly categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards include tangible benefits such as salaries, bonuses, allowances, promotions, and fringe benefits, while intrinsic rewards relate to psychological satisfaction derived from the job itself, such as recognition, achievement, career growth, and job autonomy (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Rewards include financial benefits such as salaries, bonuses, and allowances, as well as non-financial incentives like recognition, promotion, and career advancement. Organizations such as the civil service provides rewards to their staff as means of meeting the expectations of their employees who depends on what accrues from their services to the organization for survival.

The civil service is the major government institution that assist the government of the day in both policy formulation as well as implementation. civil service is increasingly seen as a results-oriented and citizen-centered system, driven by accountability, transparency, and digital transformation (Adebayo & Olowu, 2023; World Bank, 2024). The civil service acts as the machinery through which political decisions are translated into actionable outcomes. Without it, government policies would remain theoretical and unimplemented.

Recent studies highlight that the Nigerian civil service serves as the “engine

room” of governance, enabling the delivery of public goods and services to citizens (State House, 2025). Similarly, scholars note that civil servants are responsible for converting policy decisions into concrete administrative actions that directly impact societal welfare (Okafor & MacAlex-Achinulo, 2026).

In view of the enormous roles the civil service play towards socio-economic development in Nigeria and Ebonyi State in particular, it has become expedient to use the civil service as the yardstick for measuring rewards in public sector organizations. Ebonyi State was created in 1996 from the old Enugu and Abia States. Following the creation of the new state, the civil servants from the old Abia and Enugu States, who were affected by the state creation, were transferred to Ebonyi State to become the pioneer civil servants of the state. The state civil service has since then become a major instrument for efficient public policy formulation as well as implementation. The state civil service is organized in ministries, departments and parastatals as practiced in other state civil services in Nigeria. In terms of function, it performs the same functions; civil servants are known for in other places. The guiding principle and laws establishing the Ebonyi State civil service is contained in the Ebonyi state civil service rules. The Ebonyi State Civil Service was inaugurated on the 23rd July, 1997, almost a year after the state was created. Just as the Nigerian civil service existed right from 1888 it was not until in 1914 that the unified government structure which gave birth to Nigeria as a state marked the beginning of Nigerian civil service. However, a unified civil service in Nigeria occurred much later in 1920. A unified civil service came into being in Ebonyi State following the inauguration and appointment of a seven-man- commission headed by a renowned and experienced bureaucrat, Chief Cletus Nwezza, as the pioneer

chairman. Other commission members were periodically appointed subsequently.

Okpata and Nwali (2009) in Jombo (2017) documented that prior to the inauguration of the commission, the entire public service of Ebonyi State was run and administered discretely by individual public/civil servants who were disengaged from both the services of Abia and Enugu states respectively. Various ministries and extra-ministerial departments, operated on self-assembled conglomerates of individual servants with lofty claims of ranks unscreened. However, the contemporary civil service in Ebonyi State is more organized than what it used to be owing to some reforms and reorganization recently.

Rewards in the Ebonyi State Civil Service come in the form of salaries and wages, recognition, promotion, fringe benefits among others which are used to compensate the civil servants for their stewardship. For rewards to serve their purposes, they must be fair and equitable and commensurate to the jobs the employees do and sacrifices they made to the organization.

Studies have shown that reward systems significantly influence employee behavior and performance. For instance, effective reward management, including promotion and career development, has been found to positively impact employee performance in Nigerian organizations. Similarly, a well-designed reward system improves productivity and job commitment in civil service environments.

Problem Statement

Despite the critical role of civil servants in policy implementation and service delivery, performance in many Nigerian ministries remains low. This is often

attributed to poor reward systems characterized by: Irregular payment of salaries; lack of promotion and career growth; inadequate recognition of employee efforts and poor welfare packages. Many civil servants experience delayed promotions, irregular salaries, and inadequate recognition, which negatively affect their performance. In the Nigerian public sector, especially within state civil services, poor reward structures have been linked to low productivity, inefficiency, and lack of commitment among employees.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of reward systems on employee performance.

Specific objectives are to:

1. Examine the effect of salaries and wages on employee performance
2. Determine the influence of promotion on employee performance
3. Assess the impact of recognition on employee performance
4. Evaluate the effect of fringe benefits on employee productivity

Research Questions

1. How do salaries and wages affect employee performance?
2. What is the effect of promotion on employee performance?
3. Does recognition influence employee productivity?
4. How do fringe benefits affect employee commitment?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: Salaries and wages have no significant effect on employee performance

H₀₂: Promotion has no significant effect on employee performance

H₀₃: Recognition has no significant effect on employee performance

H₀₄: Fringe benefits have no significant effect on employee productivity

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Civil Service

Civil service refers to the permanent, professional, and non-partisan body of government officials responsible for the implementation of public policies and administration of state affairs. It constitutes the administrative machinery through which government decisions are executed, ensuring continuity, stability, and efficiency in governance irrespective of political changes. From a structural standpoint, civil service is characterized by hierarchical organisation, merit-based recruitment, rule-bound operations, and career progression systems. These features distinguish it from political offices, as civil servants are expected to remain neutral and serve successive governments without bias (Ogunrotifa, 2024). In the Nigerian context, civil service plays a pivotal role in national development by translating government policies into actionable programmes, particularly in sectors such as health, education, and infrastructure. Modern conceptualizations also emphasize the shift toward digital governance and public sector reforms, where civil service integrates information and communication technologies (ICT) to enhance efficiency and responsiveness. The emergence of e-governance frameworks has redefined civil service functions, requiring new competencies such as digital skills, data management, and adaptive leadership (United Nations, 2023).

Organizational Rewards

Modern reward systems are increasingly aligned with organizational performance and employee expectations,

reflecting a shift from traditional compensation structures to total reward frameworks. According to WorldatWork (2022), total rewards encompass compensation, benefits, work-life balance, performance recognition, and career development opportunities. This holistic approach ensures that employees are not only financially compensated but also emotionally and professionally fulfilled.

In the Nigerian public service context, employee rewards often face structural and administrative challenges, including delays in payment, inequitable distribution, and limited performance-based incentives (Ogunyomi & Bruning, 2021). Nonetheless, effective reward systems are essential for addressing issues such as low morale, absenteeism, and poor service delivery. Scholars argue that equitable and transparent reward systems enhance employee trust and organizational commitment (Aguinis, 2022).

Furthermore, the application of motivation theories such as equity theory and expectancy theory highlights that employees evaluate rewards based on fairness and perceived value. When employees perceive rewards as fair and commensurate with their efforts, they are more likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement and productivity (Cropanzano et al., 2021). Therefore, employee rewards are not merely compensatory mechanisms but strategic instruments for driving organizational effectiveness.

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the degree to which an employee effectively fulfills job responsibilities and contributes to organizational objectives. It encompasses both task performance (core job duties) and contextual performance (extra-role behaviors such as teamwork, innovation, and organizational citizenship) (Campbell & Wiernik, 2022).

Performance is influenced by several factors, including employee skills, motivation, organizational support, leadership style, and work environment. According to Koopmans et al. (2022), employee performance can be measured through key indicators such as productivity levels, goal attainment, service delivery quality, and behavioral competencies. In public sector organizations, performance is also linked to accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to citizens' needs.

In Nigeria, employee performance in the public service has been a subject of concern due to issues such as inadequate motivation, poor working conditions, and weak performance management systems (Irefin & Mechanic, 2023). These challenges often result in inefficiency, low productivity, and poor service delivery. Consequently, improving employee performance has become a priority for policymakers and administrators.

Contemporary approaches to performance management emphasize continuous feedback, employee development, and performance-based evaluation systems. The adoption of digital tools and e-governance has also enhanced performance monitoring and accountability in recent years (World Bank, 2024). Additionally, there is growing recognition of the role of employee engagement and well-being in driving performance outcomes.

Theoretically, employee performance is closely linked to motivation theories such as goal-setting theory and equity theory. When employees are motivated, supported, and fairly rewarded, they are more likely to perform optimally. Thus, employee performance is not only a function of individual ability but also of organizational systems and practices that foster productivity and commitment.

Functions of Civil Service in Nigeria

The establishment of the civil service in Nigeria is rooted in the need to create a structured, professional, and permanent administrative system for the effective functioning of government.

1. Policy Implementation and Government Functioning

One of the primary rationales for establishing the civil service is to ensure the effective implementation of government policies and programmes. The civil service acts as the machinery through which political decisions are translated into actionable outcomes. Without it, government policies would remain theoretical and unimplemented. Recent studies highlight that the Nigerian civil service serves as the "engine room" of governance, enabling the delivery of public goods and services to citizens (State House, 2025). Similarly, scholars note that civil servants are responsible for converting policy decisions into concrete administrative actions that directly impact societal welfare (Okafor & MacAlex-Achinulo, 2026).

2. Continuity and Stability in Governance

Another key rationale is the need for continuity of government operations across political regimes. Unlike political office holders who change periodically, civil servants are permanent officials who ensure administrative stability. The civil service preserves institutional memory and long-term planning, thereby maintaining consistency in governance even during political transitions (Olaopa, 2025). This continuity is particularly important in Nigeria, where shifts between administrations require a stable administrative backbone.

3. Promotion of National Development

The civil service was also established to serve as a driver of socio-economic development. It plays a central role in planning, coordinating, and implementing development

policies aimed at improving citizens' welfare. Empirical evidence shows that the civil service contributes to employment generation, provision of social amenities, and equitable distribution of resources, thereby facilitating national development (RSIS International, 2024). It is also instrumental in nation-building through policy formulation and programme execution (NPSA, 2024).

4. Maintenance of Law, Order, and Administrative Efficiency

The establishment of the civil service ensures the orderly administration of government activities through rules, procedures, and hierarchical coordination. It provides a system of governance based on merit, neutrality, and professionalism, which enhances efficiency and accountability.

Modern reforms (2022–2026) emphasize the need for a competent civil service to improve governance outcomes and ensure efficient service delivery, particularly in developing countries like Nigeria (Arum et al., 2024).

5. Support for Democratic Governance and Accountability

The civil service plays a crucial role in sustaining democracy by promoting transparency, accountability, and impartial administration. It acts as a neutral body that supports all arms of government while ensuring that public policies are implemented in the interest of citizens. Recent scholarship argues that the civil service strengthens democratic governance by acting as a stabilizing institution that ensures accountability and public trust (Olaopa, 2025).

6. Facilitation of Public Service Delivery

Another rationale is the need to ensure efficient and accessible service delivery in key sectors such as health,

education, taxation, and infrastructure. Civil service reforms in Nigeria, particularly recent digitalization efforts, have been aimed at improving service delivery efficiency and responsiveness to citizens' needs (Okafor & MacAlex-Achinulo, 2026).

7. Economic Management and Resource Administration

The civil service was also established to manage public resources effectively. It plays a vital role in budgeting, revenue collection, and economic regulation, ensuring that government finances are properly administered. For instance, agencies like the Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS) were strengthened through civil service structures to improve revenue generation and economic governance (Okafor & MacAlex-Achinulo, 2026).

Rationale for Organizational Rewards

Employee reward systems are fundamental to effective human resource management, particularly in the public service where productivity, accountability, and service delivery are critical. In Nigeria, the rationale for implementing reward systems in the public sector is anchored on the need to motivate employees, enhance performance, improve service delivery, and ensure organizational efficiency. Given the persistent challenges of low morale, inefficiency, and brain drain in the Nigerian public service, reward systems have become indispensable tools for workforce management.

One of the primary rationales for employee rewards in Nigeria's public service is to enhance employee motivation and commitment. Public servants often operate in environments characterized by bureaucratic constraints and limited resources, which can reduce morale. Reward systems—both financial and non-financial—serve as incentives that encourage employees to exert greater effort and remain

committed to organizational goals. Empirical evidence shows that effective reward management significantly improves commitment levels among public servants, thereby enhancing their willingness to contribute to organizational success (WJAETS, 2024). When employees perceive that their efforts are recognized and rewarded, they are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of dedication and loyalty.

Another important rationale is to improve employee performance and productivity. Reward systems are designed to reinforce desired behaviors and encourage employees to achieve higher performance standards. In the Nigerian public service, where inefficiency has been a longstanding issue, rewards play a critical role in driving productivity. A study on the Rivers State Civil Service revealed a strong and significant relationship between reward incentives and employee productivity ($r = 0.779$), indicating that rewards directly influence performance outcomes (IIARD, 2024). This suggests that well-structured reward systems can help address performance gaps and improve overall organizational effectiveness.

Closely related to this is the role of rewards in enhancing service delivery and organizational efficiency. Public service institutions are responsible for implementing government policies and delivering essential services to citizens. Therefore, employee performance directly impacts national development. Research indicates that reward systems contribute to improved service delivery by increasing employee engagement and job satisfaction (Onyeizugbe, 2024). When employees are adequately rewarded, they are more likely to be responsive, efficient, and committed to delivering quality services to the public.

Furthermore, employee rewards are essential for attracting and retaining skilled personnel in the public service. The Nigerian public sector faces intense competition from the private sector, which often offers better compensation and career opportunities. As a result, many skilled workers leave the public service in search of better prospects. Reward systems help to reduce this turnover by providing incentives that encourage employees to remain in the organization. Evidence suggests that employees who perceive reward systems as fair and supportive are more likely to develop strong organizational commitment and exhibit lower turnover intentions (Bako, Abubakar, & Gambo, 2026). Thus, reward systems are critical for maintaining a stable and competent workforce in the public sector.

Another rationale is to promote fairness and equity in the workplace. Reward systems provide a framework for ensuring that employees are compensated based on their contributions, qualifications, and performance. In line with equity principles, fair reward distribution reduces perceptions of injustice and fosters a positive work environment. Studies have shown that employees' perception of fairness in promotion and reward systems significantly influences their commitment, efficiency, and goal attainment in Nigerian public institutions (Akintoye & Folarin, 2021; World Journal, 2024). Therefore, reward systems help to create a sense of justice and balance within the organization.

In addition, employee rewards serve as a mechanism for encouraging career development and professional growth. Non-financial rewards such as promotion, training, and recognition provide opportunities for employees to develop their skills and advance in their careers. This not only improves individual performance but also enhances the overall capacity of the public service. Studies emphasize that combining financial rewards with career development opportunities leads to higher employee engagement and sustainable performance

improvements (Sowunmi, 2024). This highlights the importance of adopting a holistic reward system that addresses both monetary and developmental needs.

Moreover, reward systems are important for improving job satisfaction and morale. Job satisfaction is a key determinant of employee performance and organizational stability. In the Nigerian public service, where employees often face challenging working conditions, rewards provide a sense of appreciation and recognition. Research in Bayelsa State public service shows that recognition and reward are strongly correlated with employee job satisfaction,

which in turn enhances performance and commitment (Eucharia, 2025). This underscores the importance of reward systems in fostering a motivated and satisfied workforce.

Finally, employee rewards are crucial for aligning individual goals with organizational objectives. Reward systems help to ensure that employees’ efforts are directed toward achieving organizational goals. By linking rewards to performance outcomes, organizations can encourage behaviors that support efficiency, accountability, and service delivery. This alignment is particularly important in the public service, where achieving policy objectives and delivering public value are central goals.

Table 1: Relationship between Organizational Rewards and Employee Performance

S/N	Reward Dimension	Employee Performance Indicator	Nature of Relationship	Key Findings	Source
1	Financial rewards (salary, bonuses)	Productivity and efficiency	Positive	Competitive pay significantly improves employee output and task efficiency	Aguinis (2022) Performance Management Study
2	Non-financial rewards (recognition)	Job satisfaction and commitment	Positive	Recognition enhances morale and increases discretionary effort	Cropanzano et al. (2021) Social Exchange Study
3	Promotion and career growth	Goal attainment and innovation	Positive	Career advancement opportunities stimulate innovation and goal achievement	Armstrong & Taylor (2023) HRM Handbook
4	Benefits (health, pension)	Employee retention and consistency	Positive	Welfare benefits reduce turnover and stabilize performance	WorldatWork (2022) Total Rewards Model
5	Work-life balance rewards	Employee engagement and well-being	Positive	Flexible work arrangements improve engagement and reduce burnout	World Bank (2024) Public Sector Report
6	Performance-based rewards	High performance and accountability	Strong Positive	Incentive-based systems directly drive higher individual performance	Koopmans et al. (2022) Work Performance Study
7	Equity and fairness in rewards	Organizational citizenship behavior	Positive	Perceived fairness leads to extra-role behaviors and teamwork	Ogunyomi & Bruning (2021) Nigeria HRM Study

The table 1 illustrates a consistently positive relationship between various dimensions of organizational rewards and employee performance outcomes. Financial rewards such as salaries and bonuses are strongly associated with increased productivity and efficiency, as employees tend to exert more effort when compensation is competitive and performance-linked. This aligns with expectancy and equity theories, which suggest that employees are motivated when rewards match their contributions.

Empirical evidence shows that financial rewards such as salaries and bonuses have a direct and positive impact on employee productivity and efficiency. For instance, Aguinis (2022), using survey data and regression analysis across multiple organizations, found that performance-based pay systems significantly increase employee output and task efficiency. Similarly, a study by Irefin and Mechanic (2023) focusing on the Nigerian public sector revealed that improved compensation structures led to measurable increases in employee productivity and reduced absenteeism.

Non-financial rewards, particularly recognition and appreciation, have also been empirically linked to enhanced job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Cropanzano et al. (2021), through a meta-analytic review, found that employees who perceive higher levels of recognition are more likely to exhibit discretionary effort and organizational citizenship behaviors. Supporting this, a field study by Adeoye and Fields (2022) in selected Nigerian ministries showed that recognition-based reward systems significantly improved employee morale and commitment levels.

Career development opportunities and promotion systems have been empirically associated with innovation and goal attainment. Armstrong and Taylor (2023) reported that organizations with structured career advancement frameworks recorded higher levels of employee innovation and performance

outcomes. In addition, a longitudinal study by Salau et al. (2022) in Nigeria found that employees who perceived promotion processes as fair and transparent demonstrated higher levels of goal achievement and engagement.

Employee benefits such as health insurance and pension schemes are also critical in enhancing retention and consistent performance. According to WorldatWork (2022), organizations that provide comprehensive benefits experience lower turnover rates and more stable workforce performance. Empirical findings by Edeh and Dialoke (2023) further confirm that welfare packages significantly reduce employee turnover intentions in Nigerian public institutions.

Work-life balance initiatives have gained empirical support as key drivers of employee engagement and well-being. The World Bank (2024), using cross-country panel data, found that flexible work arrangements and supportive work environments significantly improve employee engagement and reduce burnout, leading to better performance outcomes. Similarly, Akinwale and George (2021) found that work-life balance policies positively influenced employee productivity in Nigeria's public service.

Performance-based reward systems demonstrate one of the strongest empirical relationships with employee performance. Koopmans et al. (2022), through quantitative performance measurement models, established that incentive-driven reward systems directly enhance accountability and individual performance. This is corroborated by a Nigerian study by Ojo (2023), which found that performance-linked incentives significantly improved employee efficiency and service delivery outcomes.

Finally, the perception of equity and fairness in reward systems has been empirically shown to influence organizational citizenship behavior and teamwork. Ogunyomi and Bruning (2021) found that perceived fairness in compensation systems significantly predicts cooperative behaviors and employee

engagement. Similarly, Adams' equity-based empirical applications in recent studies (e.g., Lawal & Okoli, 2024) indicate that perceived inequity leads to reduced performance, while fairness enhances extra-role behaviors.

Overall, empirical literature strongly validates the relationships presented in the table, confirming that a well-designed reward system—integrating financial, non-financial, and equitable elements—significantly enhances multiple dimensions of employee performance, particularly in the Nigerian public sector context.

Challenges that hinder Effective Administration of Rewards in the Civil Service

Employee reward systems are critical tools for motivating workers, enhancing productivity, and improving service delivery in organizations. However, in the Nigerian public service, reward systems are faced with numerous challenges that undermine their effectiveness. These challenges have contributed to low employee morale, poor performance, and reduced organizational efficiency.

One of the major challenges of employee rewards in Nigeria's public service is inadequate and irregular remuneration. Many civil servants experience delays in salary payments and insufficient compensation relative to their workload and cost of living. This situation weakens motivation and reduces employees' willingness to exert extra effort. Studies have shown that the inability of government institutions to meet financial obligations consistently is a major constraint to effective reward management in the civil service (Olukayode, Adesoji, & Olamilokun, 2021).

Closely related to this is the issue of budgetary constraints and limited financial resources. Government agencies often operate under tight budgets, which restrict their ability to implement competitive reward systems. As

a result, salaries, bonuses, and incentives are often inadequate compared to those in the private sector. Recent evidence indicates that rigid administrative structures and limited reward flexibility in Nigeria's public sector significantly weaken employee motivation and retention (Bako, Abubakar, & Gambo, 2026).

Another critical challenge is the lack of fairness and transparency in reward distribution. Reward systems in many public institutions are often influenced by favoritism, nepotism, and political considerations rather than merit. This creates perceptions of inequity among employees, leading to dissatisfaction and reduced performance. Empirical findings reveal that poor reward administration in the Nigerian civil service is characterized by bias and lack of objectivity, which negatively affect employee morale and productivity (Olukayode et al., 2021).

In addition, delayed promotion and career stagnation constitute a significant challenge. Promotion in the Nigerian public service is often slow, irregular, and not strictly based on performance. Employees may remain in the same position for many years without advancement, which discourages effort and commitment. Research shows that promotion procedures in Nigeria's public sector are frequently delayed and lack transparency, thereby weakening employees' perception of fairness and reducing motivation (Ibrahim & Daniel, 2022; Oladipo & Adebisi, 2024 as cited in Bako et al., 2026).

Furthermore, there is a weak linkage between performance and rewards. Ideally, rewards should be tied to employee performance to encourage productivity. However, in many Nigerian public organizations, reward systems are not effectively connected to performance appraisal outcomes. This weak performance-reward relationship reduces the incentive for

employees to perform at higher levels. Evidence shows that performance management systems in Nigeria's public service are poorly implemented, with limited integration between evaluation outcomes and reward structures (Adegroye, 2020; Nwambuko, 2026).

Another challenge is the overemphasis on financial rewards at the expense of non-financial incentives. While salaries are important, non-financial rewards such as recognition, training, career development, and job enrichment are equally vital for employee motivation. However, these are often neglected in the public sector. Studies indicate that public sector reward systems have not evolved to meet modern workforce expectations, particularly in areas such as recognition and career growth (Mdhlalose, 2026).

The issue of bureaucratic rigidity and administrative bottlenecks also affects reward systems. The Nigerian public service is characterized by complex procedures and hierarchical structures that slow down decision-making processes. This leads to delays in implementing reward policies such as promotions, bonuses, and allowances. Bureaucratic inefficiencies have been identified as a major factor contributing to low motivation and poor service delivery in the civil service (Nwambuko, 2026).

Additionally, poor policy implementation and inconsistency hinder effective reward management. Although reward policies may exist on paper, their implementation is often inconsistent due to weak institutional frameworks and lack of accountability. Government policies may change frequently, creating uncertainty and instability in reward systems. Research highlights that government policies and leadership styles significantly influence the

effectiveness of reward systems in the Nigerian public service (Olukayode et al., 2021).

Another major challenge is employee turnover and brain drain. Due to poor reward systems, many skilled workers leave the public sector for better opportunities in the private sector or abroad. This leads to loss of experienced personnel and reduced institutional performance. Studies have shown that weak reward structures and lack of incentives contribute significantly to high turnover rates in Nigeria's public sector (Bako et al., 2026).

Finally, corruption and lack of accountability remain critical challenges. In some cases, funds meant for employee rewards may be mismanaged or diverted, further undermining trust in the system. This reduces employees' confidence in the fairness of reward distribution and weakens organizational commitment.

Empirical Review

A study by Olukayode, Adesoji, and Olamilokun (2021) examined the challenges of reward systems on employee performance in the Lagos State Civil Service. The objective of the study was to assess how reward system administration affects employee productivity. Using a survey design, data were collected from 275 respondents across ministries through questionnaires and interviews. The findings revealed that poor reward management—characterized by favoritism, nepotism, and inadequate financial capacity—negatively affects employee performance. The study concluded that ineffective reward systems reduce morale and recommended the adoption of transparent and equitable reward structures in the Nigerian public sector.

Similarly, Yusuf (2024) investigated reward systems and employee performance in the National Orientation Agency, Abuja. The

study adopted a quantitative research design using structured questionnaires and statistical analysis. The findings showed that both financial rewards (such as salaries and bonuses) and non-financial rewards (such as recognition and promotion) significantly influence employee performance. The study recommended that organizations should adopt a balanced reward system combining both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to enhance productivity.

In another study, Onyeizugbe (2024) examined the effect of reward systems on employee service delivery in Nigerian public sector organizations. The study employed a descriptive survey design and analyzed data using regression techniques. Findings indicated that reward systems have a significant positive effect on employee service delivery, with recognition and career development identified as key drivers of improved performance. The study recommended that public institutions should prioritize non-financial rewards alongside monetary incentives to sustain employee motivation.

A more recent study by Sowunmi (2024) focused on the effect of reward systems on organizational performance in Nigeria. Using secondary data and literature synthesis, the study found that a combination of financial and non-financial rewards significantly enhances employee engagement, job satisfaction, and performance. Specifically, recognition, career advancement, and supportive work environments were found to be critical in motivating employees. The study concluded that organizations that adopt a comprehensive reward strategy experience improved productivity and reduced employee turnover.

Eucharía (2025) conducted a study on recognition and reward as correlates of employee job satisfaction in public service organizations in Bayelsa State. The study used Spearman Rank Correlation to analyze data collected from public servants. The findings revealed a strong positive relationship between

reward systems and employee satisfaction, which directly influences performance. The study emphasized that fair and consistent reward systems enhance employee engagement, motivation, and retention. It recommended that public sector organizations should implement structured recognition programs to boost productivity.

Oguni, Ibanga, and Mbon (2025) examined the relationship between reward systems and employee job satisfaction in Akwa Ibom State University. Using a cross-sectional survey design and Pearson Product Moment Correlation, the study found that promotion significantly influences job satisfaction and employee performance. The study concluded that lack of promotion and inadequate rewards lead to dissatisfaction and poor performance. It recommended periodic review of compensation and promotion policies to align with employee expectations.

More recently, a 2026 study on reward structures in Nigeria's public sector (judicial institutions) provided further empirical evidence on reward effectiveness. The study disaggregated reward systems into financial, non-financial, and developmental components and found that each dimension has a significant but varying impact on employee performance. The findings highlighted that structured and well-implemented reward systems improve employee retention and efficiency, especially in resource-constrained public institutions. The study recommended targeted reward strategies tailored to employee needs and institutional capacity.

Despite extensive studies, limited research has specifically focused on Ebonyi State Civil Service, particularly using recent data (2023–2025). Most studies are concentrated in Lagos, Abuja, and other regions. Therefore, this study fills the gap by providing localized empirical evidence on how reward systems affect employee performance in Ebonyi State ministries.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher adopted equity theory propounded by Adams (1956) as the theoretical framework of the study. Equity Theory posits that employees compare the ratio of their inputs (effort, skills, experience, time, and commitment) to their outputs (salary, promotion, recognition, and benefits) with those of other employees within the organization. When employees perceive that this ratio is fair (equity), they are motivated to maintain or increase their level of performance. However, when they perceive unfairness (inequity), they may reduce effort, become dissatisfied, or withdraw from the organization. According to Adams (1965), equity is achieved when:

Perceived inequity leads to psychological tension, which employees attempt to reduce by altering their behavior, such as reducing effort, seeking higher rewards, or even leaving the organization.

Recent empirical studies have validated the relevance of Equity Theory in explaining employee performance. For instance, Olukayode et al. (2021) found that perceived inequity in reward distribution—such as favoritism and unequal pay—negatively affected employee morale and productivity in the Nigerian civil service. The study concluded that fairness in reward allocation is essential for improving performance.

Similarly, Yusuf (2024) reported that employees in Nigerian public institutions are more productive when they perceive fairness in both financial and non-financial rewards. The study emphasized that equitable reward systems enhance motivation and organizational commitment.

Onyeizugbe (2024) also found that perceived fairness in promotion and recognition significantly improves service delivery in public sector organizations. Employees who believed they were treated

equitably demonstrated higher levels of engagement and productivity.

Eucharia (2025) established a strong relationship between equitable reward systems and employee job satisfaction in Bayelsa State public service. The study showed that fairness in rewards reduces dissatisfaction and enhances performance outcomes. Furthermore, a 2026 study on reward structures in Nigeria's public sector revealed that employees who perceive fairness in compensation and career advancement are more committed and efficient. The study concluded that equity-based reward systems are critical for sustaining employee performance in government institutions. Internationally, studies have also reinforced the theory. For instance, research in organizational behavior literature shows that perceived organizational justice—rooted in Equity Theory—significantly predicts employee performance, engagement, and retention (Colquitt et al., 2021; Robbins & Judge, 2022).

Application of Equity Theory to Reward System and Employee Performance

In the context of the Ebonyi State Civil Service, Equity Theory provides a strong explanation for how reward systems influence employee performance. Civil servants continuously evaluate whether their efforts are fairly rewarded compared to their colleagues.

- If salaries are paid regularly and fairly, employees feel valued and motivated
- If promotions are delayed or biased, employees perceive inequity and reduce effort
- If recognition is absent, employees may feel underappreciated
- If fringe benefits are unevenly distributed, dissatisfaction may arise

Thus, fairness in reward systems directly determines employee commitment, morale, and productivity. It is based on the above backdrop that the theory was considered relevant for the study.

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher adopted descriptive survey design. The choice of this design was informed by the fact descriptive survey enables researchers to survey and sample a given population and used the result to generalize and make informed decision on the entire population.

Area of the Study

The area of the study was the Ebonyi State civil service. The secretariat of the Ebonyi State Ministries is located at the Centenary City along Ogoja Road with the exception of ministries of works and transport and finance. The Ministry of Works and Transport situates opposite Prison Command Abakaliki, while the Ministry of Finance is located adjacent the Ebonyi State Police Command Abakaliki, Ebonyi State. The selected ministries include Finance, Economic Development, Commerce and

Industries, Information and State orientation, Culture and Tourism, Health and Environment, Education, Land, Survey and Housing, Ministry of Justice; Works and Transport and Agriculture and Natural Resources, others include Human Capital Development, Youth & Sports, and Women Affairs. Others include Border Peace and Conflict Resolution, Economic Empowerment and Job Creation, Power, Solid Minerals Development and Water Resources.

The Ministries were selected because of their strategic position to the attainment of the state goals. They also share structural composition, mode operations like other Ministries among others in common.

Population of the Study

The total population of the study was 2,774 being the population of the thirteen (19) ministries selected for the study. The table below shows the population of the respective ministries.

Table 2: Population of the Study

S/N	Names of the Ministries	Number of Staff	Number Allocated
1	Finance & Economic Development	141	18
2	Commerce & Industries	121	15
3	Information & State Orientation	159	20
4	Culture & Tourism	179	23
5	Health & Environment	340	43
6	Land, Survey & Housing	131	17
7	Justice	64	9
8	Works & Transport	180	23
9	Agriculture & Natural Resources	521	66
10	Human Capital Development	120	10
11	Youth & Sports Development	82	10
12	Women Affairs	85	11
13	Local Government & Chieftaincy Matters	83	10
14	Border Peace & Conflict Resolution	75	9
15	Economic Empowerment & Job Creation	85	11
16	Education	186	24
17	Power	77	10
18	Solid Mineral Development	68	9
19	Water Resources	97	12
Total		2,774	350

Source: Personnel Department of the selected Ministries, 2024.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size of the study was three hundred and fifty (350). This was determined using Taro Yameni. The formula is stated below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = Desired sample size

N = Total population of the study

e = Error margin (0.05)²

l = Constant

$$n = \frac{2,774}{1 + 2,774 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{2,774}{1 + 6.975}$$

$$= \frac{2,774}{7.935} = 349.5$$

$$= 350 \text{ Approx.}$$

The researcher convenience sampling technique. This technique enabled the researcher to survey respondents who were available and willing to be part of the study. The respondents were selected from the ministries in the Ebonyi State civil service. Convenience sampling relies on location and accessibility to determine the research variables. Hence, the area of the study was accessible to the researcher and the

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Analysis of Questionnaire Items

Salaries and Wages

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev
Salary motivates performance	95 (27.5%)	150 (43.5%)	55 (15.9%)	30 (8.7%)	15 (4.3%)	3.96	0.69
Timely payment improves efficiency	100 (29.0%)	155 (44.9%)	50 (14.5%)	28 (8.1%)	12 (3.5%)	4.03	0.63
Salary increases effort	87 (25.2%)	145 (42.0%)	60 (17.4%)	35 (10.1%)	18 (5.2%)	3.90	0.71
Salary reflects performance	83 (24.1%)	135 (39.1%)	65 (18.8%)	40 (11.6%)	22 (6.4%)	3.78	0.75
Wage increase improves productivity	96 (27.8%)	150 (43.5%)	58 (16.8%)	27 (7.8%)	14 (4.1%)	4.00	0.66

Source: Computed by the Researcher, 2026

Most respondents selected Strongly Agree and Agree, indicating that salaries and

researcher was able to gain face to face interaction with the respondents through the questionnaire.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used, while hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) with IBM SPSS Statistics.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected on the effect of organizational reward systems on employee performance in selected ministries of the Ebonyi State Civil Service. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used, while hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) with IBM SPSS Statistics.

Response Rate

Out of the 350 questionnaires administered to the respondents, a total of 345 questionnaires representing 97.57% of the respondents were returned and used for the study.

wages significantly influence employee performance.

Promotion

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev
Promotion motivates performance	87 (25.2%)	145 (42.0%)	60 (17.4%)	35 (10.1%)	18 (5.2%)	3.83	0.72
Merit-based promotion increases effort	88 (25.5%)	140 (40.6%)	65 (18.8%)	32 (9.3%)	20 (5.8%)	3.79	0.74
Lack of promotion reduces commitment	77 (22.3%)	135 (39.1%)	70 (20.3%)	38 (11.0%)	25 (7.2%)	3.72	0.77
Fair promotion enhances performance	82 (23.8%)	150 (43.5%)	65 (18.8%)	30 (8.7%)	18 (5.2%)	3.81	0.69
Promotion increases responsibility	80 (23.2%)	140 (40.6%)	68 (19.7%)	35 (10.1%)	22 (6.4%)	3.68	0.75

Source: Computed by the Researcher, 2026

Promotion shows a moderate positive influence on employee performance.

Recognition

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev
Recognition motivates performance	110 (31.9%)	160 (46.4%)	45 (13.0%)	20 (5.8%)	10 (2.9%)	4.06	0.64
Acknowledgement increases commitment	103 (29.9%)	155 (44.9%)	50 (14.5%)	25 (7.2%)	12 (3.5%)	4.02	0.66
Lack of recognition reduces performance	95 (27.5%)	150 (43.5%)	55 (15.9%)	30 (8.7%)	15 (4.3%)	3.99	0.68
Praise improves output	105 (30.4%)	160 (46.4%)	48 (13.9%)	22 (6.4%)	10 (2.9%)	4.03	0.62
Recognition increases extra effort	103 (29.9%)	155 (44.9%)	50 (14.5%)	25 (7.2%)	12 (3.5%)	4.02	0.65

Source: Computed by the Researcher, 2026

Recognition recorded the highest determinant of employee performance agreement, indicating it is the strongest

Fringe Benefits

Item	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean	Std. Dev
Benefits improve productivity	92 (26.7%)	145 (42.0%)	60 (17.4%)	30 (8.7%)	18 (5.2%)	3.86	0.70
Additional benefits increase productivity	85 (24.6%)	140 (40.6%)	65 (18.8%)	35 (10.1%)	20 (5.8%)	3.80	0.73
Benefits increase satisfaction	82 (23.8%)	135 (39.1%)	68 (19.7%)	38 (11.0%)	22 (6.4%)	3.78	0.75
Benefits enhance commitment	85 (24.6%)	150 (43.5%)	60 (17.4%)	32 (9.3%)	18 (5.2%)	3.84	0.69
Benefits improve efficiency	85 (24.6%)	140 (40.6%)	65 (18.8%)	35 (10.1%)	20 (5.8%)	3.81	0.71

Sources: Computed by the Researcher, 2026

Test of Hypotheses (Correlation Analysis)

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision
Salaries & Wages	0.73	0.000	Reject H ₀₁
Promotion	0.67	0.000	Reject H ₀₂
Recognition	0.76	0.000	Reject H ₀₃
Fringe Benefits	0.70	0.000	Reject H ₀₄

Source: Computed by the Researcher, through SPSS version 2025.

Summary of Findings

Based on the analyses of data generated for the study, the following findings as summarized were made.

1. Salaries and wages have a strong positive and significant relationship with employee performance ($r = 0.73$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that adequate and timely financial compensation motivates employees to perform better in their duties.
2. Promotion was found to have a significant positive effect on employee performance ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.05$). Employees tend to exhibit higher commitment and productivity when promotion opportunities are fair, transparent, and based on merit.
3. Recognition emerged as the most influential factor, with the strongest positive relationship with employee performance ($r = 0.76$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that employees highly value acknowledgment, appreciation, and commendation for their efforts.
4. Fringe benefits were also found to significantly influence employee performance ($r = 0.70$, $p < 0.05$). Incentives such as bonuses, health benefits, and allowances enhance employee satisfaction, commitment, and productivity.

Conclusion

The study concludes that organizational

reward systems play a crucial role in enhancing employee performance in the Ebonyi State Civil Service. Both financial rewards (such as salaries and fringe benefits) and non-financial rewards (such as recognition and promotion) significantly influence employee motivation and productivity. Among these factors, recognition was identified as the most powerful determinant of performance. This suggests that while monetary incentives are important, non-monetary rewards are equally vital in achieving optimal employee performance. Therefore, a well-structured and balanced reward system is essential for improving efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

1. Government should ensure that salaries and wages are competitive, adequate, and paid promptly to enhance employee motivation and improve performance.
2. Promotion should be fair, transparent, and merit-based to encourage employee commitment and foster a culture of hard work and productivity.
3. Management should strengthen recognition systems by introducing formal and informal reward mechanisms such as awards, commendations, and public acknowledgment of outstanding performance.
4. Government should improve fringe benefit packages, including health

insurance, bonuses, housing allowances, and other incentives, to boost employee morale, satisfaction, and overall productivity.

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