THE IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONAL REWARD SYSTEM ON EMPLOYEES' COMMITMENT IN NIGERIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES - A STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

[1]OFUANI, A. B., [2]NZEGWU, A. N. & [3]OHIAERI, N.V.
[1, 2] Department of Business Administration,
University of Lagos, Akoka - Lagos, Nigeria.
[3*]Department of Finance, University of Lagos"
*Corresponding author: aofuani@unilag.edu.ng.

Abstract

This research work sought to find out the effect of financial rewards on the commitment of employees in Nigerian Public Universities, in addition to the relationship existing between non-financial rewards and employees' commitment in Nigerian Public Universities. It also sought to know if career developmental opportunities impact on the commitment of staff in Nigerian Public Universities. The University of Lagos was chosen for the study for convenience in gathering data. Data was gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to 170 respondents comprising of 90 academic staff and 80 non-academic staff, drawn from 8 faculties on the Main Campus, and analysed using regression analysis and ANOVA. The findings show that financial rewards affect the commitment of staff. Also, a positive relationship exists between non-financial rewards and employees' commitment. Career development opportunities impact on the commitment of staff in the University. The study concludes that both financial and non-financial rewards complement each other when adequately administered in the right mix in attaining employee commitment in Nigerian public universities. It was recommended that management should make deliberate efforts to review, revaluate and re-examine financial reward practices and packages of their staff. Efforts should also be made to identify the non-financial needs of its staff and tailor rewards to satisfy these. Efforts should also be made to reformulate and redirect the career developmental programs to positively benefit their staff for greater commitment and better service deliveries.

Keywords: Financial and non-financial rewards, employee commitment, career development.

1. Background to the Study

Among the various factors of production that facilitate production of goods and services, the human element or resource is regarded as the most important and crucial element in any organization. This is because not only do they facilitate and coordinate other factors of production which are land, machines and capital, but they also play important roles in ensuring the accomplishment of organizational goals to enhance the long-term continuity of any institution. There is therefore a great need for effective management of these important assets, in order to ensure continuous optimal performance and long-term commitment of these elements in any organization. The employee offers his/her energy, skills, expertise and knowledge to the organization in return for a consideration called pay or reward which may be financial or non-financial reward.

Datta (2012) suggests that numerous institutions consider their employees as a pivotal input in creating organizational value and gaining upper hand over rival firms. Therefore, it is imperative for organizations to look after their employees, motivate and create a mechanism that would ensure increment in work productivity through different techniques and one of the strategies used in attaining this is the reward system.

According to World at Work (2015), rewards include financial, non-financial and fringe benefits. They are benefits comprising of monetary and non-monetary rewards that are used to complement financial compensation that employees receive and they include any variety of programs that provide time off, employee services and protection programs. These advantages are given, notwithstanding pay and structure (Armstrong, 2012). Anku-Tsede and Kitui (2013) define organizational commitment as a bond, association or link of the workers with the organization they work for. It is a psychosomatic condition that differentiates the individual's association from the proposition for the decision to carry on attachment to the organization. Also organizational commitment is defined by Lamba and Choudhary (2013) as the individual psychological attachment and commitment to the organization, which transcends loyalty to an organization. It involves an active relationship with the organization such that individuals are willing to dedicate their talents, time, effort and resources in order to contribute towards the organization's well-being.

Ihionkhan and Aigbomian (2014) maintain that organizations are successful and effective to the level to which its employees are well satisfied and committed toward achieving the stipulated objectives and goals of that organization. Employees that are committed have a sense of belonging, sense of ownership and identity with the organization they work for.

2. Statement of the Problem

In the educational sector, especially in most Nigerian tertiary institutions, there has being a high level of dissatisfaction in the process of determining the basis for and implementing the reward for inputs and contributions of workers; measuring performance necessary for getting promotions, and allocation of responsibilities. This has resulted in a high level of inequity in the process of rewarding employees in most tertiary institutions.

A good number of these tertiary institutions have reward and fringe benefits that are not based on the contributions and inputs of the employees but rather on seniority, favoritism, and non-merit based factors. Most times, this trend elicits and reinforces certain negative behavioral patterns and responses from employees, feeling that they have victimized and cheated (Kirunda, 2010).

Oftentimes, the reward management practices and processes are used as instruments for punishing, intimidating, oppressing, suppressing some while also being used to favor those who are willing and able to dance to the tune of those in power and authority, even when they do not merit such rewards, promotions and appointments into certain strategic positions. This may therefore demoralize those individuals and employees who rightfully deserve these positions and want to give their best and skills towards the advancement and accomplishment of the goals and objectives of their institutions (Isaack & Dinah, 2016). Affected workers with this perception believe that since the reward system in the institutions are based on nepotism, favoritism and partiality; there is no need to give their best. This on the long run leads to internal conflicts, disruption of the smooth operations of the University's programs, non-cooperation amongst the academic staff, also rivalry between the academic and non-academic staff, go slows, soldiering, unscrupulous tendencies and activities to take advantage of and defraud the system. This is not in cognizance with the principles of fairness, equality, equity, egalitarianism and objectivity (Armstrong, 2012).

Finally, there has been an exodus of highly experienced and qualified employees in tertiary institutions from this country to foreign countries, seeking greener pastures and opportunities that would reward their efforts and contributions better, due to dissatisfaction. Those left behind may end up underperforming, due to low motivation because of poor reward systems, thereby undermining the efforts of the Nigerian tertiary institutions to compete favorably with their counterparts outside the country.

The main objective of this study is to determine the relationship between organizational reward system and employees' commitment in Nigerian Public Universities. To achieve this main objective, attempts will be made to answer the following questions

i. What is the effect of financial rewards on employees' commitment amongst staff in Nigerian Public Universities?
ii. What is the relationship between non-financial rewards and employees' commitment in Nigerian Public Universities?
iii. Do career developmental opportunities impact on the commitment of staff in Nigerian Public Universities?

3. Research Hypotheses

i. **H_0:** Financial rewards have no effect on employees' commitment amongst staff in Nigerian Public Universities

ii. **H_0:** There is no relationship between non-financial rewards and employees' commitment of staff in Nigerian Public Universities.

iii. H$_o$: Career developmental opportunities do not impact on the commitment of staff in Nigerian Public Universities.

4. Review of Literature

4.1 Concept of commitment

According to Mowday, Steers and Porter (1979), organizational commitment is considered as the overall quality of a person's relationship with and level of association in a specific organisation. Danish and Usman (2010) posit that there is increased commitment of employees to organisations when they are fully motivated and satisfied with their jobs, because their needs (financial and non-financial) have been met. Bozeman and Gaughan ((2011) consider that commitment is elicited from employees based on their perceptions that they are paid what they are worth. Akpodiete and John (2020) in their own contribution state that employee performance and commitment is based on organisational ability to recognise and reward its employees, with respect to their inputs in the organisation Workers who have solid organizational commitment are portrayed as having solid faith in the qualities and objectives of the organization. They are therefore willing to upgrade endeavours due to legitimate concerns for the organisation.

Salancik (1977) characterizes commitment as a condition of being the place an individual is obligated by his/her activities to support exercises where he/she is included. Price (2011) also defined it as the level of contribution and identification that workers have with their organizational values, mission and objectives. Armstrong (2012) accentuates that employee commitment is the dedication and connection that workers have in an organisation and it is related with their sentiments about the organization. Subsequently, commitment means both the behavioural inclinations and the emotions that workers have towards an organization.

4.2 The concept of Reward

The Reward management system entails a systematic phenomenon that is in tandem with the culture, structure and values of the organisation. This is based on the set of convictions on the need to accomplish fairness, value, consistency and straightforwardness in establishing the reward framework and system. This philosophy perceives that human resource management entails investment in human capital, with the expectation of receiving a dividend on investment. It is also considered proper to reward people differently in proportion to their contributions towards the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives. According to Chiang and Birtch (2008), reward is anything of value to an employee that the employer is prepared to give for his/her services to an organisation. Franco-Santos and Gomez-Mejia (2015) argue that rewards are meant to attract, maintain and encourage employees to perform optimally and remain committed to the organisation.

Where this is lacking or considered unfair by the employee, commitment, productivity, satisfaction and loyalty to the organisation are adversely affected. Ray and Ray (2011) suggested that one major reason individuals work is to obtain or get rewarded. Employees are willing to render their services, energies, skills and expertise to any organization in exchange for some form of compensation called reward. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, complete reward system is expected to consist of five items namely, compensations (beyond basic pay), benefits, flexibility (work-life balance), performance recognition and career development. These items are grouped under two broad headings – financial (monetary) and non-financial (non-monetary) rewards. Financial rewards comprise of pay, bonuses, allowances, insurance, incentives, promotions and job security; while non-financial rewards include appreciation, meeting the new challenges, caring attitude from employer, appreciation and recognition. Reward management plays a major role in the human resource process of managing and coordinating the most essential element of any organization, which is the work force (Human resource).

4.3 Theoretical Framework

There are various theories that exist with regards of reward system and practices and how certain factors influence the employee towards being committed to the organization or not. These theories attempt to clarify the role of reward system and how they enhance or deter organizational commitment among employees. For this section we shall carefully examine two theories which are - Equity theory and Social Exchange theory.

4.4 Equity Theory

The equity theory is a major theory used in explaining and buttressing the role of reward systems and practices on not only performance of the individual employee, but also his long term commitment towards the organization. Employees offer their services, skills, energy, mental and physical effort towards the accomplishment of an organizational goals and objectives for a consideration called pay or reward. The whole idea of pay is that the employee believes that his reward should be commensurate with the level of input and contribution he or she exerts in the organization and when this is not achieved would lead to him perceiving that he been unjustly rewarded and reward is no longer based on merit and rather on inequity.

Adams (1963) suggests that inequity exists for an employee when he sees or perceives absence of decency or fairness. This is when the individual expresses a dissatisfaction between the outcome (remuneration for work) and input (endeavors at work) in comparison with some other individuals within the same organisation(Miner, 1980). Inequity results when an individual believes or perceives one is either under-benefited or over-benefited. These feelings are negative and should inspire administrators of compensation to work towards decreasing the lopsidedness. Since employees typically desire positive outcomes, they are likely to react by expanding inputs, through working more enthusiastically. The summary of this theory is that, an employee who feels under-compensated is demotivated and his commitment for that organization would be low; whereas the employee who feels the reward system follows the principle of merit pay, fairness, equality and equity, tends to be highly motivated with an increased level of commitment to the organization, resulting in better performance and productivity.

4.5 Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory explains social behavior as the interaction of two parties in relation to the cost and benefit of a relationship in order to determine risks and benefits of being in that relationship. Cropanzano, Rupp and Byrne (2013) posit that parties are expected to have a symbiotic relationship where both parties benefit from the existence of that relationship.

The theory believes that humans appraise, analyze and weigh their behaviors on rational basis of maximizing individual profit. Most people value acceptance, loyalty, financial support, affection and companionship and might find it rewarding to be in a relationship with a person who enhances their social status and this is regarded as the reward. Where this appraisal is to the contrary, the individual is compelled to leave the relationship. This assumption supports the view that social exchange theory to a great extent, takes care of issues of basic decision making in remaining in a relationship that satisfies essential or fundamental individual needs and enhances social connections.

4.6 Empirical Evidence

Ghorbani and Ladoni (2013) carried out an investigation of 84 marketing managers, production managers and ranking directors from home appliance organizations in Iran to see the impact of remuneration frameworks on new product improvement. The results of their investigation revealed that there was a positive and realistically noteworthy connection between remunerations management and new product development.

A study performed on the relationship between employees' perceptions of equity and their levels of organizational commitment in the Zimbabwean hospitality industry by Chinomona, Chinomona and Joubert (2013), using responses from 352 respondents. The results showed that there is a significantly positive relationship between an employee's perception of equity and fairness in an organization and his level of commitment to that organization. This level of commitment is demonstrated in the employee's strong emotional and moral attachment to his organization, as well as his willingness to strongly identify with and remain loyal to the authority and internalized norms of his organization for a long time, thereby eliminating high turnover rates.

The findings of a research by Oaya, Mambula and Anyatowu (2019) on employees of Nasco Group in Jos, Plateau state, Nigeria, to determine the impact of fringe benefits on employee performance, showed that health protection, provisions for retirement benefits and recognition had positive and significant impact on performance of employees in the group.
Results from a study by Akpodiete and John (2020) of 178 employees drawn from 26 registered and functional quick-service restaurants in Port-Harcourt, Rivers state, on the relationship between reward systems and employee commitment, concluded that reward systems had significant influences on affective, continuance and normative commitment of the employees.
In a study carried out by Opio and Abal (2022) on 135 employees of Apac Municipal Council in Uganda on the effects of financial rewards on employee commitment in the three classes of commitment (affective, normative and continuance), the results showed that financial reward had a positive significant effect on each of them in varying degrees.

5. Research Methods

Research design, population, data collection instrument, sampling technique and size:
This study adopted a quantitative research design using the survey questionnaire technique, which is most suitable for depicting examples, patterns and connections in numerical form (Lochmiller and Lester, 2017). This method enables an easier quantitative measurement and analysis of variables without manipulations.

The population of the study is 1629 from 8 faculties, comprising 1199 academic and 430 non-academic staff on the Main Campus of the University of Lagos. The sample size was calculated using the Yemane (1967) formula for each of the groups, arriving at a total of 173 (92 academic and 81non-academic staff). However, the instrument was administered to 170 respondents.

A structured questionnaire containing 56 items divided into two major sections - Section A comprising 10 items to gather the demographic characteristics (Age, Faculty, Class of staff whether academic or non-academic, Gender, among others) of the respondents; and section B, comprising other variables used in analyzing the research questions was administered. To measure financial and non-financial rewards, 22 items were drawn and responses elicited utilizing the Likert response scale which ranges from **Strongly agree (SA)**, **Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (DA)** and **Strongly Disagree (SD)**. To measure organizational commitment, a scale considered most accepted for this developed by Allen and Meyer (1990) having 24 items divided into 3 groups with 8 items in each, was adopted. These items measured affective(Affection for the job), continuance (Fear of loss) and normative (Sense of obligation to stay) in the respondents.

Table 1. The Sampling Frame

S/N	FACULTY	ACADEMIC STAFF	NON- ACADEMIC STAFF	TOTAL
1	ART	159	60	219
2	EDUCATION	157	70	227
3	ENGINEERING	190	80	270
4	ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES	107	54	161
5	LAW	57	23	80
6	MANAGEMENT SCIENCE	121	61	182
7	SCIENCES	259	35	294
8	SOCIAL SCIENCES	149	47	196
	TOTAL	1199	430	1629

Source: Human Resources, University of Lagos (2019)

The Convenience and Stratified sampling techniques were used in getting a good representation of the respondents from the Main Campus of the University of Lagos. The population used is the eight (8) Faculties on the Main Campus of the University of Lagos, stratified into academic and non-academic staff. 22 respondents each from 5faculties and 20 each from 3 faculties were randomly selected.

The statistical technique employed in this research work is the Regression Analysis using the Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS) version 20. Regression Analysis was used to establish the functional relationship and the specific direction of the relationship of the variables of this study. This statistical analysis tool helps in analyzing, and interpreting data as well as form the basis for accepting or rejecting hypotheses and giving meaning to the data so collected from the respondents of this study.

6. Results

Below is a summary of the analysed data and interpretation. A total of one hundred and seventy (170) questionnaires were administered across the eight (8) faculties to 90 academic and 80 non-academic staff, with one hundred and forty-five (145) satisfactorily completed and returned. An ordinary least square regression technique was used to test the hypotheses. This gave valuable data which aided in reaching conclusions and making vital suggestions and recommendations for this study.

Presentation and analysis of data according to research hypotheses (Presented in Null Form)

Table 2. Regression analysis for Hypothesis one

Mode 1	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**	**Durbin Watson**
1	.464	.215	5.66312	1.695

Table 3. ANOVA

Model	**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig**
Regression	1240.158	1	1240.158	38.669	.000[b]
Residual	4521.996	141	32.071	32.071	
Total	5762.154	142			

In order to test for the null hypothesis, the simple linear regression analysis was used.

The decision rule is that the Null Hypothesis is rejected if the probability value of F is less than 5% significance level which is ($P < 0.005$)

Table 1 shows the regression result of Hypothesis 1. R^2 reflects the coefficient of determination, which is the ratio of changes in the dependent variable that can be predicted from the independent variable. The R^2 value is 21.5% which explains the proportion of the total variation in financial rewards that leads to variations in organizational commitment. The adjusted R^2 value of 21.5% shows the actual variation in employee’s commitment as a result of changes in financial rewards.

From the ANOVA table, since the probability value of F statistic is 0.000 ($P=0.000$, $P < 0.005$) which is less than 5% significance level, the Null Hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that the financial rewards significantly affects the commitment of employees in the University of Lagos.

Table 4. Regression analysis for Hypothesis Two

Model	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**	**Durbin Watson**	**Durbin-Watson**
1	.423[a]	.179	.173	5.54316	1.437

Table 5. ANOVA

Model	**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig**
Regression	945.693	1	945.693	30.778	.000[b]
Residual	4332.460	141	30.727		
Total	5278.154	142	5278.154		

Table 4. Shows the regression result of hypothesis 2. R^2 is the coefficient of determination, which is the ratio of changes in the dependent variable that can be predicted from the independent variable. The coefficient of determination R^2 value is 42.3 % and explains the proportion of the total variations in commitment that are attributed to variations in non-financial rewards. The adjusted r^2 value of 17.3% shows the actual variation in the university employee commitment as a result of changes in non-financial rewards. From the ANOVA table, the probability value of F statistic is 0.000 ($P=0.000$, $P < 0.005$) which is less than 5% significance level. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that non-financial rewards significantly affect the commitment of employees in the University of Lagos.

Table 6. Hypothesis Three

Mode1	**R Square**	**Adjusted R Square**	**Std. Error of the Estimate**	**Durbin Watson**	**Durbin-Watson**
1	.261[a]	.068	.062	6.10623	1.639

Table 7 ANOVA

Model	**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig**
Regression	384.676	1	384.676	10.317	.002[b]
Residual	5257.324	141	37.286		
Total	**5642.000**	**142**			

The tables 6 & 7 above show the regression analysis and ANOVA results of test of null Hypothesis three. The R^2 value of 6.8 % explains the proportion of the total variation in commitment that is attributed to variations in the career developmental opportunities of staff in the University of Lagos. The adjusted R^2 value of 6.2% shows the actual variation in employees' commitment as a result in the changes in career developmental opportunities of staff. From the ANOVA table, since the probability value of F statistic is 0.000 ($P=0.000$, $P < 0.005$) which is less than 5% significance level, the Null Hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that career developmental opportunities significantly impact the commitment of employees in the University of Lagos.

7. Discussion

The findings of the test of hypothesis one shows that financial rewards have a significant effect on organizational commitment; and that there is a positive relationship between the two variables as reflected in staff of the University of Lagos. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Puwanenthire (2011), that there is a positive relationship between the total reward system and job satisfaction of employees in Banks in Sri Lanka. This is also in agreement with Bakalis, (2006) who posited that organizational commitment and employees' loyalty can be increased with financial benefits and rewards. Test of hypothesis two findings reveal that non-financial rewards (career development opportunities, verbal praise and public recognition amongst others) have a significant positive relationship with organizational commitment of staff in the University of Lagos. The result of studies conducted by Eze (2012) among staff in University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) in Enugu State supports this result that, there is a significant relationship between non-monetary rewards and employees' performance/commitment to the University.

Also, as shown in the analysis of hypothesis three, career developmental opportunities have significant impact on commitment among academic and non- academic staff in the University of Lagos. When employees are paid based on the work they do adequately and effectively, it goes a long way in increasing their commitment. They may even be willing to do jobs that are not in their job description because they know they could be compensated for it. This finding is similar to that in the study by Gohari, Ahmadloo, Boroujeni and Hosscinipour (2013) which found a positive relationship between contingent pay and commitment among employees in tourist firms in Malaysia.

8. Summary of findings

1) The study found out that there is a significant relationship between financial reward systems and organizational commitment among staff of the University of Lagos, thus implying that financial reward systems play an important role in enhancing employees' morale and commitment level in Nigerian public universities
2) The research also revealed that there is a positive relationship between non-financial reward and organizational commitment, and the former plays a very important role in the commitment of staff in public universities, as shown by the respondents.
3) The research reveals that career developmental opportunities (a non-financial reward) impact on the commitment of the employee to the institution.

9. Conclusion

This research work sought to find out the effect of financial rewards on the commitment of employees in Nigerian Public Universities, in addition to the relationship existing between non-financial rewards and employees' commitment in Nigerian Public Universities. It also sought to know if career developmental opportunities impact on the commitment of staff in Nigerian Public Universities. Data was gathered through structured questionnaire and analysed using regression analysis and ANOVA. The findings show that the financial reward system and packages such as the basic pay, fringe benefits, contingent pay, profit sharing, allowances and other financial benefits that are allocated and distributed among staff (both academic and non- academic staff) affect the commitment of staff towards this institution. Also, a positive relationship exists between non-financial reward packages and systems and employees' commitment among staff in the University of Lagos as well as other Nigerian public universities. In addition, career development opportunities impact on the commitment of staff in Nigerian public universities. One can safely conclude therefore that both financial and non-financial rewards complement each other when adequately administered in the right mix and proportion in attaining employee commitment in Nigerian public universities.

10. Recommendations

From the findings of the studies, the followings recommendations are made:

1. That the management of the University of Lagos and other public universities in general, should make deliberate efforts to review, revaluate and re-examine the financial reward practices and packages. Most of these reward systems and packages are outdated and do not fit in with current economic realities characterized by inflation, higher interest rates and price hikes. To continue the use of the existing methods of rewards could be demoralizing and make employees less loyal, or less committed to quality service delivery to these institutions.
2. Sometimes, there are management errors in thinking that only financial rewards are adequate in eliciting employee commitment and loyalty, thereby neglecting the effect of non-financial rewards. However, this study has shown that this little component plays an important role towards the commitment of an employee. The management should therefore try to identify the needs of its staff and tailor the appropriate non-financial reward tools in order to get the best out of the employees.
3. Management of Nigerian public Universities should ensure that they reformulate and redirect the career developmental programs for their staff, towards actualizing the pre-determined goals, which are to improve the skills, technical knowhow, and capabilities of its staff so that they can execute their duties optimally, effectively and efficiently.

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