



Bureaucratic Incentive Structures and Administrative Performance: A Critical Analysis of Performance-Based Reward Systems in Lagos State's Public Service (2015-2024)

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Abstract

The study critically examined the efficacy of performance-based reward systems in the Lagos State Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, using a mixed-methods approach underpinned by critical realist epistemology. It explored how formal and informal reward mechanisms shape bureaucratic behavior and influence administrative efficiency in a developing state context. Employing the Expectancy and Equity theories, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how performance incentives and recognition programmes impact employee motivation, satisfaction, and productivity. The population of the study comprised 1000 employers. Quantitative data were collected from a sample of 363 employees, while qualitative insights were derived from 30 in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Quantitative data analysis involved Structural Equation Modeling, while qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis with NVivo software. The findings revealed both successes and challenges, including effective recognition programmes, inconsistent financial incentives, and limited access to professional development. The study concluded that enhanced transparency, equitable reward allocation, and inclusive growth opportunities are essential to fostering motivation and improving public service outcomes within the Ministry.

Keywords: Institutional Capacity, Organizational Efficiency, Performance-Based Rewards, Public Value Creation, Public Sector Reform,

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Introduction

The transformation of public sector reward systems remained a critical focus in contemporary public administration theory and practice, particularly at the intersection of bureaucratic behavior and institutional performance (Hood & Dixon, 2015; Virani & Van de Wal 2023; Van Dooren, Bouckart, & Halligan, 2015; Bryson, George & Seo, 2024). Historically, Weber's conceptualization of bureaucracy as a hierarchical, rule-based system provided the foundational framework for public administration, emphasizing predictability, uniformity, and impersonality (Weber, 1978). However, as state institutions worldwide confronted the challenges of modernization and efficiency, the theoretical discourse around bureaucratic incentive structures shifted to incorporate more complex understandings of public service motivation and organizational behavior (Perry & Vandenabeele, 2015; Ritz, Brewer, & Neumann, 2016; Van Loon & Jakobsen, 2022). This shift reflected broader tensions between New Public Management's (NPM) market-oriented approaches and ongoing debates around public value creation, institutional capacity, and bureaucratic accountability (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Hood & Dixon, 2015; Van Dooren, Bouckart, & Halligan, 2015). New Public Management, which emerged in the late 20th century, aimed to infuse private sector practices into public service, emphasizing performance measurement, cost-efficiency, and competition (Hood, 1991; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017; Dunleavy & Margetts, 2023). Principal-agent theory further supported this model, suggesting that structured incentives could mitigate agency problems by aligning the interests of public servants (agents) with those of policymakers (principals) (Miller & Whitford, 2016; Virani & Van de Wal, 2023). However, the complexities inherent in public service delivery—particularly in developing contexts—challenged the direct application of private sector performance models to public bureaucracies (Andrews, Pritchett & Woolcock, 2017).

The emergence of Digital Era Governance (DEG) represented a subsequent phase in public administration theory, highlighting the transformative potential of digital technologies for bureaucratic reform. Dunleavy, Margetts, Bastow, & Tinkler (2006) argued that DEG emphasized reintegration, digitalization, and needs-based holism, shifting away from NPM's fragmented and market-driven focus. This paradigmatic shift has ushered in novel prospects for enhancing performance metrics and institutional accountability, while simultaneously engendering concomitant challenges tied to navigating digital disparities and safeguarding the equitable distribution of technological advancements (Bannister & Connolly, 2020; Dunleavy & Margetts, 2023). Within contemporary scholarly discourse, epistemic



communities have increasingly interrogated the ascendancy of hybrid administrative frameworks that synthesize components of classical Weberian bureaucracy, New Public Management (NPM), and Digital Era Governance (DEG) to address the idiosyncratic exigencies of developing polities (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011; Lindgren et al., 2019; Pollitt, 2013; Viana, 2021; Desai & Manoharan, 2024). Peters (2021) posits a revitalised commitment to Weberian tenets—particularly in contexts where procedural integrity, rule-bound stability, and impartial administration retain paramount significance. In contrast, contrarian scholarship underscores the imperative of recalibrating these foundational doctrines to assimilate market-driven accountability mechanisms and digitized administrative capacities, thereby optimizing operational agility and responsiveness (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011). This dialectic between bureaucratic orthodoxy and administrative innovation frames critical inquiry into the interplay between enduring bureaucratic ethos and emergent performance optimization architectures, particularly within institutionally polycentric environments marked by the coexistence of codified protocols and informal governance praxes. The Weberian bureaucratic paradigm, as delineated in its ideal-typical form, has historically constituted a cornerstone of public administrative systems, institutionalizing principles of hierarchical authority, codified proceduralism, and impersonal decision-making (Weber, 1978). Within this framework, jurisdictional competencies are demarcated through stratified command structures, with rational-legal authority operationalized to standardize administrative processes and mitigate arbitrariness (Beetham, 1996). Such formalization ostensibly engenders systemic efficiency, predictability, and equity in public service provision by circumscribing discretionary agency through rule-bound roles and responsibilities (Goodsell, 2004).

Yet, the ossifying tendencies inherent to this model have been extensively critiqued for engendering institutional path dependencies. Rigid adherence to codified norms frequently constrains innovative capacity and adaptive responsiveness, particularly in governance ecologies characterized by volatility and polycentric demands (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Cross-national empirical analysis of European bureaucracies underscores how inertial forces within hierarchical systems impede the assimilation of agility-oriented reforms, revealing structural incompatibilities between traditional frameworks and emergent performance-driven incentive architectures (Hammerschmid et al., 2019). Such tensions are exacerbated when reformist agendas disrupt entrenched power equilibria and normative conventions.

While scholarship on performance-based reward systems has proliferated (Christensen & Lægreid, 2011; Lindgren et al., 2019; Van Loon & Jakobsen, 2022; Viana, 2021; Desai & Manoharan, 2024; Virani & Van



de Wal, 2023), critical lacunae persist regarding their interstitial dynamics with informal institutional logics, particularly within sub-national administrative contexts in the Global South. In settings such as Lagos State, informalised practices—deeply embedded in patrimonial networks and cultural ontologies—often mediate the operationalization of formal meritocratic mechanisms (Wetterberg et al., 2016). This dialectical interplay between de jure incentive structures and de facto sociopolitical realities exemplifies the broader complexities of administrative modernization in developing polities, where institutional hybridity, resource constraints, and informal power configurations frequently subvert technocratic reform trajectories (Monteiro & Adler, 2022; Lindgren et al., 2019). Consequently, the efficacy of performance-based systems remains contingent upon their embeddedness within localized institutional ecosystems, necessitating a recalibration of Weberian orthodoxy to account for heterodox governance realities.

Lagos State's public service provided a compelling case study for these dynamics, positioned within wider debates about administrative capacity in developing states. As Africa's largest sub-national bureaucracy, Lagos served as a critical example of how institutional reforms interacted with established bureaucratic practices (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2019). This study analyzed Lagos State's efforts to modernize its administrative framework through performance-based reward systems from 2015 to 2024, employing Matland's ambiguity-conflict model, extended by Virani and van der Wal (2023), to explore how such systems functioned under conditions of institutional ambiguity. These conditions were characterized by multiple performance metrics, resource constraints, and the presence of stakeholders with differing interests (Rainey & Jung, 2015). Drawing on street-level bureaucracy theory, as reinterpreted by Hupe, Hill, and Buffat (2015), this research investigated how front-line public servants perceived and applied reward systems, focusing on the discretionary power of street-level bureaucrats and the complex interplay between formal incentives and informal coping mechanisms. The study also built on recent theoretical contributions on "problem-driven iterative adaptation" by exploring the operation of reward systems within a developing state's complex institutional landscape, while engaging with discussions about "pockets of effectiveness" in African public administration (Roll, 2014).

This study aimed to address several key research questions: How did formal reward mechanisms interact with informal norms to shape bureaucratic behavior within Lagos State's public service? To what extent did performance-based incentives improve administrative efficiency in developing state bureaucracies? What institutional factors influenced the effectiveness of reward systems in public service delivery? By



examining the intricate relationship between reward systems and bureaucratic performance in Lagos State, this research provided valuable lessons for similar institutional contexts, contributing to broader discussions on state capacity building and the role of international development partners in administrative reform.

Literature Review

Bureaucratic Structures and Performance Management Systems

The symbiotic relationship between bureaucratic architectures and performance management regimes constitutes an epistemic axis within modern public administration inquiry. Though Weber's ideal-typified bureaucracy persists as a paradigmatic referent, emergent scholarship interrogates its operational dynamics within polycentric institutional ecosystems marked by competing legitimacy claims and adaptive pressures (Peters & Pierre, 2017). Post-Weberian paradigms advance a multidimensional interrogation of bureaucratic morphogenesis, particularly as digitalization reconfigures administrative ontologies while ostensibly preserving axiomatic principles of procedural rationality and accountability (Dunleavy et al., 2006). This evolution reflects a dialectic between institutional path dependency and technocratic imperatives for agility, as global South bureaucracies—grappling with institutional hybridity and sociopolitical contingencies—increasingly deploy hybridized frameworks to reconcile efficiency mandates with demands for transparency and participatory responsiveness. Crucially, the adaptive capacity of these structures hinges on their ability to assimilate algorithmic governance tools without eroding the normative scaffolding of impartiality and rule-bound authority—a tension foregrounded in contexts where sustainable governance outcomes remain contingent on balancing innovation with institutional integrity.

Neo-Institutional Perspectives on Bureaucratic Organization

Neo-institutional analytical lenses illuminate the constitutive tensions between formalised organizational schemata and the tacit logics of informal institutions that permeate bureaucratic regimes. Monteiro and Adler (2022) interrogate the symbiotic evolution of Weberian administrative orthodoxy and autochthonous institutional frameworks, crystallising hybrid governance assemblages that amalgamate supranational normative prescriptions with territorially embedded sociopolitical imperatives. Such institutional syncretism attains heightened salience in Global South administrative terrains, where formal bureaucratic infrastructures interdigitate with deeply sedimented informal praxis, fostering ecosystems marked by functional polyvalence—simultaneously capacitating and constraining governance outcomes



through their dualistic operational dynamics (Farazmand, 2012; Onyango, 2022). Andrews (2013), via a pluridisciplinary analysis of African administrative systems, empirically maps how vernacular transfigurations of universalist bureaucratic norms metastasize into contextually contingent, rule-divergent operational modalities. These adaptive informalisms, though frequently stigmatized as vectors of extra-legal governance, paradoxically function as institutional sinews enhancing administrative plasticity and contextually attuned responsiveness—attributes indispensable in resource-depleted governance ecologies. Yet, such para-formal innovations concomitantly incubate asymmetric accountability, wherein the epistemic opacity endemic to informal institutionalization amplifies principal-agent asymmetries, fostering rent-seeking enclaves and neo-patrimonial entrenchments that corrode the normative edifice of public service integrity (Andrews, 2013).

Performance Management in Bureaucratic Contexts

Contemporary epistemic shifts in bureaucratic performance management scholarship reflect a heightened analytical engagement with the structural-institutional dialectics shaping administrative efficacy. Eom and Lee (2022) interrogate how digitalization reconfigures bureaucratic ontologies, particularly within performance metricization and incentive architectures, positing that technocratic paradigms must reconcile institutional affordances—such as capacity ceilings, cultural-informal power matrices, and territorially contingent administrative logics—with the imperatives of algorithmic governance. Empirical insights from Southeast Asian bureaucracies illustrate this duality: while digitized performance surveillance regimes have ostensibly enhanced procedural transparency and allocative efficiency, they concurrently expose systemic fissures, including epistemic asymmetries in data stewardship and institutional incapacities to operationalize complex sociotechnical systems (Heeks, 2018). The adjacent externalities of digital governance—ranging from cyber-physical vulnerabilities to the sociotechnical marginalization of analog-dependent populations—demand rigorous institutional foresight when embedding technocratic innovations within path-dependent bureaucratic ecosystems (Bannister & Connolly, 2020). Such contingencies underscore the non-negotiability of digital habituation frameworks: policy architectures that synergize infrastructural modernization with grassroots digital literacy interventions to mitigate exclusionary divides and cultivate equitable participation in datafied governance modalities.



Integration of Performance-Based Reward Systems (PBRs)

The assimilation of performance-based reward systems (PBRs) into traditional bureaucratic frameworks engenders a complex dialectic between managerial innovation and institutional path dependence, particularly within developing polities characterized by fragmented administrative ecosystems. Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2015) delineate a matrix of mediating variables underpinning PBRs efficacy, bifurcated into institutional architectures—encompassing administrative capacity thresholds, organizational cultural hegemonies, techno-managerial implementation competencies, and infrastructural readiness—and contextual exigencies, such as politicized principal-agent interfaces, stakeholder coalitional dynamics, fiscal-material constraints, and culturally embedded normative schemas.

While PBRs mechanisms (e.g., meritocratic remuneration, performance-linked bonuses) ostensibly operationalize New Public Management (NPM) tenets by tethering individual agency to quantifiable outputs (Moynihan, Pandey, & Wright, 2012; Perry, Engbers, & Jun, 2009), their deployment frequently incites institutional immune responses within bureaucracies. Crozier and Friedberg (2017) posit that the depersonalized rationality intrinsic to Weberian administrative regimes complicates the individuation of merit, as such practices risk destabilizing collective ethos predicated on procedural equity and impartiality. Furthermore, PBRs adoption may catalyze perverse operational logics, wherein public servants, incentivized by metricized benchmarks, exhibit temporal myopia—privileging ephemeral, quantifiable outcomes over longitudinal public value creation (Rosenbloom, Kravchuk, & Clerkin, 2022). This paradox underscores the latent tensions between performance-driven managerialism and the normative foundations of public stewardship.

Local Factors Influencing PBRs Implementation in Lagos State

The operationalization of Performance-Based Reward Systems (PBRs) within Lagos State's bureaucratic apparatus is mediated by a constellation of socio-institutional vectors, notably the politico-bureaucratic dialectic, cultural-institutional incongruities, and techno-managerial capacity asymmetries. The interstitial dynamics between political elites and administrative actors constitute a critical determinant, wherein sustained political patronage is requisite for institutionalizing PBRs, yet the volatility inherent in electoral cycles frequently precipitates policy discontinuities, eroding reformist path dependencies (Bach & Allen, 2010). Culturally, the implementation of PBRs confronts normative dissonances: Lagos's administrative ethos, deeply rooted in communitarian solidarities and collective accountability frameworks, engenders



skepticism toward meritocratic individualism, which is perceived as antithetical to the redistributive logic underpinning public service legitimacy (Omisore&Adeleke, 2015). This tension manifests as institutional hybridity, wherein globalized performance metrics are vernacularized to align with indigenous relational paradigms, albeit at the cost of diluting incentive structures' behavioral salience. Concomitantly, fiscal-material constraints—encompassing infrastructural precarities, budgetary fragmentation, and digital governance lacunae—impede the robust operationalization of PBRS. Technocratic incapacities to systematize performance data analytics and ensure equitable reward distribution exacerbate principal-agent dilemmas, wherein the motivational efficacy of PBRS is attenuated by erratic enforcement and perceived procedural inequities (Andrews, 2013). These structural impediments underscore the paradox of isomorphic mimicry: the transplantation of techno-managerial reforms into contexts devoid of enabling ecosystems risks perpetuating symbolic compliance over substantive governance transformation (Pritchett, Woolcock, & Andrews, 2013).

Impact on Service Delivery and Administrative Performance

The efficacy of Performance-Based Reward Systems (PBRS) in Lagos State manifests sectoral asymmetries, reflecting both catalytic and constraining institutional dynamics. In transactional sectors such as healthcare and revenue administration, PBRS has demonstrably augmented procedural efficiency and accountability through metricized target-setting, aligning agent behavior with organizational objectives (Bird, 2015; OECD, 2019; Hoque& FCPA, 2021). Conversely, in complex policy domains—urban planning, social welfare—PBRS falters, constrained by the epistemic intractability of quantifying multidimensional outcomes and the temporal disjuncture between inputs and societal impact.

The system's atomistic incentive structures further engender collaborative attrition, destabilizing the relational networks essential for cross-functional service delivery. This metric fixation precipitates a performative reductionism, wherein bureaucrats optimize for narrow, quantifiable outputs at the expense of intangible public goods, such as community trust or equitable resource allocation (Roelofs, 2023). Such myopia underscores a critical paradox: PBRS risks incentivizing compliant mediocrity over transformative stewardship. These observations crystallize the broader dialectic in bureaucratic evolution: the tension between Weberian procedural integrity and the neo-managerial mandate for agile responsiveness. Lagos's experience epitomizes the duality of administrative modernization—PBRS can streamline routinized functions yet stymie innovation in contexts requiring adaptive judgment. Resolving



this impasse necessitates institutional syncretism: embedding quantitative accountability within qualitative governance frameworks that valorize ethical discretion and collective efficacy.

Theoretical Framework

Expectancy Theory

Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) conceptualizes employee motivation as a teleological cognitive calculus, wherein agentic behavior emerges from deliberative evaluations of valence (subjective utility of rewards), instrumentality (perceived reward-task contingency), and expectancy (self-efficacy appraisals). Transposed onto Lagos State's public sector milieu, this rational-choice paradigm posits that financialized incentive architectures—notably performance-contingent remuneration—could ostensibly optimize motivational valence, synchronize agent behavior with organizational teleology, and amplify productive output through mechanistic behavioral conditioning (Barclay et al., 2017). Yet, the theory's reductionist ontology faces substantive critique for its elision of socio-affective variables that co-constitute workplace agency. Scholars contend that its hyperrationalist axioms inadequately account for the affective contagion of organizational climates, the relational capital embedded in hierarchical networks, and the normative scripts governing collective conduct—dynamics that render decision-making polysemic rather than purely instrumental (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2002; Barsade & Neill, 2016; Ashkanasy et al., 2017). In response, White and Drucker (2019) advocate a motivational pluralism, integrating symbolic recognition, career scaffolding, and psychosocial rewards to address the existential precarity of intrinsic validation within bureaucratic ecologies.

Within this analytical scaffold, Expectancy Theory functioned as a hermeneutic lens for deconstructing Lagos State's reward system, interrogating how monetary and non-monetary incentives coalesce (or fracture) agentic intentionality. The framework illuminated the teleological alignment—or misalignment—between institutional incentive structures and individual heuristic valuations, revealing disjunctures where extant reward modalities inadequately catalyze valence or instrumentality. Empirically, it furnished a diagnostic matrix to assess the institutional efficacy of Lagos's motivational infrastructure, foregrounding reforms to recalibrate incentive design toward contextually resonant motivational vectors—those harmonizing pecuniary gains with the psychosocial exigencies of public service ethos.



Methodology

This investigation adopted a critical realist lens (Danermark & Morgan, 2023) to dissect the interplay between performance-based reward systems (PBRs) and institutional dynamics within Lagos State's public bureaucracy. A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design (Creswell & Clark, 2017) was deployed, prioritizing quantitative analysis to identify structural patterns, followed by qualitative inquiry to unearth contextualized causal mechanisms. The study population encompassed 1,000 public servants across hierarchical strata, with a statistically representative sample of 363 participants derived via Yamane's sampling formula. A multi-stage stratified sampling strategy ensured proportional inclusion of junior, mid-level, and senior bureaucrats, mitigating selection bias and enhancing ecological validity. Quantitative data were harvested using three psychometrically robust instruments: Performance Management Assessment Scale ($\alpha = 0.89$): Gauged alignment between PBRs objectives and operational outcomes. Bureaucratic Motivation Inventory ($\alpha = 0.87$): Mapped extrinsic/intrinsic motivational drivers. Administrative Performance Metrics: Archival data on service delivery efficiency and goal attainment. All instruments underwent rigorous validation—Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) affirmed construct validity, while Cronbach's α (>0.85) ensured internal consistency. Qualitative exploration employed semi-structured interviews ($n=30$) and six focus groups (8–10 participants each), strategically sampled to capture divergent institutional perspectives—frontline implementers, mid-tier managers, and policy architects. Interview protocols, informed by Ostrom's institutional analysis framework (2011), probed tacit norms, power asymmetries, and unintended consequences of PBRs. Focus groups utilized process-mapping exercises to visualize systemic bottlenecks. Analytically, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) deciphered quantitative relationships between PBRs variables, while NVivo-driven thematic coding distilled qualitative narratives into axial categories (e.g., performative compliance, metric distortion). Methodological triangulation reconciled statistical trends with agentic interpretations, adhering to critical realism's stratified ontology. Ethical rigor was maintained through institutional review board approvals, anonymized data protocols, and iterative informed consent. While limitations in generalizability persist—given Lagos State's unique bureaucratic ecology—the design's methodological pluralism yielded granular insights into PBRs's catalytic and corrosive effects on public service productivity.



Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Nature of Reward System in Lagos State Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources

Item	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Qualitative Insight
I feel adequately rewarded for my contributions through the current salary structure	40.9	40.4	15.3	3.4	2.07	0.973	"The salary structure seems fair, but sometimes bonuses are not consistent." (Respondent 14)
I receive recognition and appreciation for my work	41.1	49.1	4.1	5.6	3.03	1.066	"Recognition comes mostly during public meetings." (Respondent 22)
Opportunities for professional development are available	17.3	28.3	27.3	27.3	2.44	1.166	"Training is often limited to senior staff." (Respondent 10)
Package of benefits enhancing overall well-being	23.6	32.1	29.2	12.9	2.24	1.103	"Benefits do not include health coverage, which is important." (Focus Group Participant)
Support for healthy work-life balance	42.3	29.7	18.2	8.5	2.33	1.030	"There is flexibility, but workload often disrupts work-life balance." (Respondent 8)
Overall Mean					2.42		

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Data in table 1 show how employees generally perceive the reward system in terms of salary, recognition, and work-life balance positively. However, qualitative feedback indicates inconsistencies in the application of bonuses and limited access to professional development, especially for junior staff. To further enhance the reward system, clearer communication about benefits and expanding professional growth opportunities, especially for junior roles, are recommended. Thematic Analysis: A recurring theme among employees is the lack of consistency in applying bonuses and the limited scope of professional development. These issues are particularly pronounced for junior staff, who often feel excluded from growth opportunities.

**Table 2: Efficiency of Reward System in Targeting Employee's Performance**

Item	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Qualitative Insight
Reward system aligns with organizational goals	43.3	31.6	16.5	8.5	2.29	1.005	"The reward system feels disconnected from actual performance targets." (Interviewee 5)
Employees understand the criteria used in the reward system	33.6	29.2	20.0	17.3	2.45	1.113	"Most criteria are unclear, especially for promotions." (Respondent 3)
Fairness and merit-based distribution of rewards	31.9	26.5	23.8	17.8	2.41	1.063	"Favoritism affects who gets rewarded." (Focus Group Participant)
Motivation from current reward system	36.0	33.3	24.6	6.1	2.21	1.007	"Rewards motivate me, but only to an extent due to low visibility of criteria." (Interviewee 9)
Transparency in reward distribution	52.6	23.6	23.8	0.0	2.29	0.824	"Processes are sometimes transparent, but criteria aren't always fair." (Respondent 12)
Overall Mean					2.16		

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Data in table 2, showthat while a portion of employees acknowledges the reward system's alignment with organizational goals, many cite unclear criteria and a perceived lack of fairness. Qualitative insights suggest favoritism and insufficient transparency are key barriers to efficiency. It is recommended that the Ministry develops a comprehensive guide to explain reward criteria clearly and ensures equitable distribution of rewards. Thematic Analysis: Major themes include a lack of transparency and perceived favoritism in the distribution of rewards. Employees highlighted the need for clearer criteria and more equitable processes to foster trust and motivation.

**Table 3: Impact of Reward System on Employee Performance**

Item	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Qualitative Insight
The rewards system motivates me to perform at my best	21.7	14.6	42.6	42.6	2.49	0.984	"I would be more motivated if rewards were tied to specific, clear achievements." (Respondent 19)
Rewards enhance job satisfaction and work experience	34.5	25.8	27.3	12.4	2.39	1.031	"The rewards help a little, but do not fully address workload issues." (Interviewee 6)
Positive influence on job commitment	35.8	27.5	27.5	9.2	2.27	0.966	"Reward systems do foster commitment, but not consistently." (Focus Group Participant)
Rewards are proportionate to contributions	32.1	30.7	20.7	16.5	2.51	1.360	"Efforts are often not matched by appropriate rewards." (Respondent 2)
Promotion of a competitive work environment	28.0	22.1	32.6	17.3	2.40	1.016	"Competition is good, but it's not always healthy due to limited rewards." (Interviewee 4)
Overall Mean					2.39		

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Data in table 3 show that the impact of the reward system on performance appears mixed, with many respondents disagreeing on its motivational capacity. Qualitative data indicate that lack of alignment between effort and rewards affects perceived value and motivation. Specific recommendations include making the reward system more achievement-based, clearly outlining criteria, and addressing workload issues. Thematic Analysis: The primary themes include inadequate alignment between effort and reward, with employees expressing frustration about the lack of meaningful incentives tied to clear achievements. Improvements in workload management and transparency in reward distribution are needed to enhance motivation.

**Table 4: Strategies to Enhance Employee Rewards for Hard Work**

Item	SA (%)	A (%)	D (%)	SD (%)	Mean	STD	Qualitative Insight
Recognition programmes motivate employees	48.7	43.1	0.0	8.3	1.70	0.762	"Recognition programmes are effective, but could be more frequent." (Respondent 7)
Financial incentives for exceptional work	16.3	11.9	38.4	33.3	2.71	1.055	"Bonuses are rare and often do not reflect actual performance." (Focus Group Participant)
Support for skill acquisition	21.4	15.3	42.6	20.7	2.50	1.001	"Training is available, but not accessible to all employees." (Interviewee 11)
Non-monetary benefits such as recognition	35.8	27.5	27.5	9.2	2.27	0.966	"Non-monetary benefits like recognition work better than cash." (Respondent 20)
Overall Mean					2.32		

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 4 data indicates that recognition programmes are generally seen as effective, while financial incentives are less frequently experienced by employees. Qualitative responses suggest that increased accessibility to skill development and a more transparent approach to non-monetary benefits could enhance motivation. It is recommended to increase the frequency of recognition and improve access to training opportunities. Thematic Analysis: Themes indicate that employees value recognition, but they also express concerns over the frequency and equitable access to such recognition. Employees believe that increased consistency in recognition programmes, along with more accessible opportunities for professional development, would improve overall motivation and engagement.

Discussion of Findings

Nature of Reward System in Lagos State Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources

The data reveals mixed responses on salary and bonuses, with concerns about inconsistencies, especially for junior staff. Many employees find compensation satisfactory, but addressing discrepancies is crucial for fairness. Aman-Ullah, Ibrahim, Mehmood, and Aman-Ullah (2023) emphasize that equitable compensation enhances satisfaction. Revising bonus criteria could improve transparency and equity. Recognition is generally acknowledged, but it is often limited to public settings. More individualised acknowledgment is needed for employees to feel valued. Though symbolic recognition mechanisms are nominally institutionalized, their efficacy is circumscribed by performative public spectacles that valorize visibility over substantive contribution. A critical lacuna persists in 'agentic



acknowledgment’—personalized validation of individual agency—which participatory governance frameworks posit as indispensable for cultivating psychological ownership and intrinsic motivation (Kim & Mauborgne, 2003). Concurrently, professional development opportunities exhibit stratification, with junior employees reporting limited access to career-advancement resources.

Thilagavathy and Geetha (2023) and Lee & Sirgy (2024) suggest consistent implementation of work-life balance policies. Addressing workload demands could enhance policy effectiveness. Prioritizing targeted training programmes and codifying promotion pathways are imperative to redress hierarchical disparities. The benefits framework receives moderate approval, yet significant gaps—such as inadequate health coverage—undermine its efficacy. They further argued that democratizing access to mentorship, reskilling platforms, and codified promotion trajectories could attenuate these asymmetries, transmuting bureaucratic inertia into agile talent pipelines. Aman-Ullah et al. (2023) stress that holistic benefit packages, coupled with proactive communication strategies, are essential to employee well-being. Addressing these lacunae could bolster institutional trust. While work-life balance policies are nominally endorsed, excessive workloads frequently negate their implementation. Lingard and Francis (2009) and Lee and Sirgy (2024) suggest consistent implementation of work-life balance policies. Addressing workload demands could enhance policy effectiveness.

Aman-Ullah et al. (2023) emphasize that structural adjustments to workload distribution, alongside consistent policy enforcement, are critical to operationalizing these initiatives. In summary, to cultivate a motivated workforce, strategic interventions should prioritize: institutionalizing transparent bonus allocation protocols; expanding professional development access for junior staff; enhancing communication channels to clarify benefit entitlements; and integrating individualised recognition into organizational culture. These measures, grounded in Habermasian ideals of deliberative governance (1996), reimagine the Ministry’s reward ecosystem as a relational infrastructure—one that harmonizes technocratic efficiency with the affective ontologies of public service. By enshrining equity as both a distributive and discursive imperative, Lagos State could pioneer a Global South exemplar of human-centric bureaucratic modernization.

Efficiency of Reward System in Targeting Employee Performance

Empirical findings suggest that the extant reward regime aligns well with the organizational goals of the Lagos State Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, as perceived by most employees. Such



congruence is pivotal for synchronizing agentic behavior with institutional objectives, resonating with Mazikana's (2019) assertion that goal-reward consonance catalyzes performative optimization. Yet, there are mixed perceptions regarding the clarity of performance evaluation criteria and fairness in reward distribution: While many employees understand the criteria, others express uncertainty, indicating gaps in communication and transparency. These fissures echo Choi and Whitford's (2017) assertion that clear evaluation criteria are essential for effective motivation. Notably, latent critiques of relational clientelism in reward allocation permeate qualitative narratives, reflecting Barclay et al.'s (2017) caution favoritism in reward allocation erode meritocratic legitimacy and engender organizational anomie. While the reward system exerts a net-positive motivational valence—consistent with Latham and Locke's (2007) reinforcement theory—its impact remains bifurcated. Ensuring rewards are tailored to individual needs and perceived as fair is key to maximizing their effectiveness. Enhancing communication, fairness, and transparency are imperative for optimizing the reward system's impact on employee performance.

Impact of Reward System on Employee Performance

The findings indicate mixed perceptions regarding the motivational impact of the rewards system within the Lagos State Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. While some employees view the system as effective in motivating performance, a significant portion expresses disagreement or uncertainty, suggesting discrepancies in how rewards are perceived. This dissonance stems from tripartite fissures: perceived reward insufficiency, misalignment with agentic drivers (e.g., intrinsic aspirations, career growth), and episodic recognition protocols that erode trust in procedural equity. Mazikana (2019) posits that distributive equity constitutes a linchpin for motivational optimization, necessitating recalibration to bridge expectation-reward asymmetries. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment exhibit analogous heterogeneity. Though some employees corroborate positive valence from the reward system, others critique equity deficits and operational inefficacies, suggesting that the current system may not adequately address individual needs or provide consistent satisfaction. Choi and Whitford (2017) and Barclay et al. (2017) theorize that perceptual equity functions as a sine qua non for fostering organizational fidelity, underscoring the imperative for institutional recalibration of reward allocation matrices and hermeneutic clarity in evaluative benchmarks. The data further suggests that systemic refinements—particularly enhancing transparency, procedural fairness, and incentive personalization—could potentiate enhanced performative outputs. This empirical heterogeneity underscores the imperative for agent-centric reward design: a paradigm shift from monolithic incentive frameworks to pluralistic architectures ensuring



ontological resonance with agentic value systems. By embedding flexibility and participatory feedback loops, the Ministry could transmute its reward ecosystem into a dynamic scaffold that harmonizes organizational objectives with the existential logics of public service labour.

Strategies to Enhance Employee Rewards for Hard Work

The data suggests the efficacy of structured recognition programmes (e.g., "Employee of the Month") in reinforcing desired behaviors, with Grove (2022) and Luthans (2000) underscoring their role in fostering motivation. Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) corroborates this, positing that perceived effort-reward linkages are critical to sustaining employee engagement. Institutionalizing such programmes can amplify their impact, provided they are consistently applied and visibly tied to performance metrics. Financial incentives, while potent motivators, yield bifurcated perceptions due to inconsistencies in distributional equity. Choi and Whitford (2017) emphasize that bonuses attain maximal efficacy only when perceived as equitable and performance-aligned. Adams' Equity Theory (1963) further elucidates that transparency in allocation criteria is non-negotiable to mitigate perceptions of distributive injustice, which can otherwise erode trust and motivation. Skill development initiatives reveal similar variability, with disparities in access—particularly for professional advancement—undermining their utility. Heneman, Judge, and Kammeyer (2019) advocate for democratizing training opportunities, noting their dual role in enhancing satisfaction and retention. Complementing these with non-monetary benefits (e.g., mentorship, flexible work arrangements) can address heterogeneous employee needs, aligning reward structures with individualised aspirations.

In summary, a tripartite strategy—integrating recognition protocols, equitable financial incentives, and inclusive skill development—emerges as pivotal. By embedding transparency, equity, and adaptability into reward systems, organizations can transcend one-dimensional incentives, fostering a culture of sustained engagement and performance excellence. This approach aligns with contemporary public administration paradigms that prioritize human capital as a cornerstone of institutional efficacy.



Conclusion

This study underscores the intricate challenges of embedding reward systems within Lagos State's bureaucratic architecture, particularly in the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. While formal incentives align with organizational objectives, systemic gaps persist in transparency, equity, and access. Employees report divergent views: recognition programmes motivate effectively, but inconsistent financial rewards and restricted professional development opportunities erode trust. The data indicates mixed perceptions among employees regarding the motivational impact of financial and non-financial incentives. Although recognition programmes are generally effective, inconsistencies in financial reward distribution and limited opportunities for professional growth are key areas of concern. These findings resonate with broader theoretical debates on the interplay of formal incentives and informal norms within bureaucratic settings, particularly in developing contexts characterized by institutional constraints. These findings mirror global debates on balancing formal incentives with informal norms in developing bureaucracies, where institutional constraints often distort policy implementation.

Recommendations

To enhance the effectiveness of the reward system, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Improve Transparency and Communication:** The Ministry should develop comprehensive guidelines to clearly articulate the criteria and processes involved in performance evaluation and reward allocation, thereby mitigating perceptions of favoritism and inequity.
2. **Tie Financial Incentives to Performance Outcomes:** Financial incentives should be more closely aligned with measurable performance outcomes to ensure fairness and motivation among employees.
3. **Expand Access to Professional Development:** Investment in training programmes, particularly for junior staff, should be prioritized to ensure inclusivity in capacity building, fostering both employee satisfaction and organizational performance.
4. **Diversify Recognition Programmes:** Recognition programmes should be expanded to include more individualised and informal acknowledgment beyond public settings, enhancing motivation and workplace morale.



These recommendations align with both Expectancy theory, underscoring the importance of aligning rewards with employee expectations and institutional values to promote sustainable motivation and performance in the Ministry.

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