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Research Article

Reward Administration and Employee Productivity in the Nigerian Public Service: Evidence from the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between reward administration and employee job performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The study was motivated by concerns over declining employee motivation, inadequate reward practices, delayed promotions, limited recognition, and poor welfare provisions, which have negatively affected employee commitment and performance within the public service. Specifically, the study investigated the relationship between financial rewards and employee job performance, as well as the influence of employee recognition on workers' performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The study population comprised 1,248 employees drawn from the Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Information and Strategy, and the Civil Service Commission. Using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula at a 5% level of precision, a sample size of 303 respondents was determined. A combination of stratified and simple random sampling techniques was employed to select the respondents. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, while descriptive statistics and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to analyse the data and test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Of the 303 questionnaires administered, 290 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 95.7%. The findings revealed that financial rewards have a significant positive relationship with employee job performance and that employee recognition significantly enhances workers' performance. The study further established that prompt payment of salaries and allowances, equitable reward administration, merit-based promotion, regular recognition of outstanding performance, and improved employee welfare significantly enhance employee motivation, organizational commitment, and effective service delivery. The study concluded that a comprehensive reward administration system that integrates both financial and non-financial rewards is essential for improving employee job performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The study therefore recommended the institutionalization of transparent reward policies, timely merit-based promotions, effective employee recognition programmes, improved welfare packages, and conducive working conditions to enhance employee motivation, job performance, and overall organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: Reward administration; Financial rewards; Employee recognition; Employee job performance; Akwa Ibom State Civil Service; Public service

Introduction

Reward administration is a fundamental component of human resource management that involves the design, implementation, and evaluation of compensation systems aimed at attracting, motivating, and retaining employees while enhancing organizational performance. It encompasses both financial rewards, such as salaries, wages, bonuses, and allowances, and non-financial rewards, including recognition, promotion opportunities, career development, job security, and employee welfare programmes. An effective reward administration system aligns employee contributions with organizational objectives, promotes equity and fairness, and enhances employee commitment and productivity (Armstrong & Brown, 2022; Milkovich, Newman, & Gerhart, 2020).

In contemporary public administration, reward administration has become increasingly important because public organizations rely heavily on a competent, motivated, and committed workforce to achieve national development objectives. Civil servants constitute the machinery through which government policies, programmes, and development initiatives are translated into practical outcomes. Consequently, the effectiveness of public institutions depends largely on the quality of their human resource management practices, particularly reward administration (World Bank, 2023). Governments across the world have therefore continued to reform compensation systems to improve employee motivation, strengthen institutional performance, and enhance public service delivery.

The relationship between reward administration and employee job performance has received considerable attention in organizational and behavioural research. According to Armstrong and Brown (2022), reward systems influence employee attitudes and behaviour by reinforcing desired performance, encouraging organizational commitment, and improving job satisfaction. Similarly, Milkovich et al. (2020) argued that employees who perceive reward systems as equitable and performance-oriented are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of productivity, creativity, and organizational citizenship behaviour. The effectiveness of reward administration is therefore determined not only by the level of financial compensation but also by employees' perceptions of fairness, transparency, recognition, and opportunities for career advancement.

The theoretical foundation for reward administration is strongly supported by motivational theories. Victor Vroom's Expectancy Theory posits that employees are motivated when they believe that increased effort will result in improved performance and that superior performance will be rewarded with valued outcomes. Likewise, John Stacey Adams' Equity Theory emphasizes that employees evaluate the fairness of rewards by comparing their contributions and rewards with those of others. Where employees perceive inequity in compensation, promotion, or recognition, motivation and job performance are likely to decline. These theories suggest that effective reward administration promotes employee satisfaction, commitment, and improved organizational performance through fair and transparent reward practices.

Reward administration comprises both intrinsic and extrinsic dimensions. Intrinsic rewards arise from the work itself and include achievement, recognition, responsibility, autonomy, and opportunities for personal growth. Extrinsic rewards consist of tangible benefits provided by the employer, such as salaries, bonuses, pensions, health insurance, housing allowances, and promotion. Research has consistently shown that organizations that combine both forms of reward achieve higher levels of employee motivation and performance than those relying solely on monetary compensation (Gerhart & Fang, 2015; Armstrong & Brown, 2022). Consequently, modern reward management emphasizes a total rewards approach that integrates financial compensation with career development, work-life balance, employee recognition, and professional growth.

Within the Nigerian public service, reward administration remains a significant determinant of employee performance and organizational effectiveness. Despite several public service reforms aimed at improving compensation systems, many public institutions continue to experience challenges associated with irregular promotion exercises, delayed salary adjustments, inadequate welfare packages, limited opportunities for career development, and perceived inequities in reward distribution (National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission, 2023). These challenges have contributed to declining employee morale, reduced productivity, absenteeism, labor disputes, and increasing migration of skilled personnel from the public sector to private organizations and foreign labor markets. The Akwa Ibom State Civil Service occupies a strategic position in implementing government policies and delivering public services across various sectors of the state economy. The service is responsible for policy implementation, financial administration, personnel management, regulatory functions, and the coordination of government programmes aimed at promoting socioeconomic development. The effectiveness of these responsibilities depends substantially on the competence, motivation, and commitment of civil servants. Consequently, an efficient reward administration system is essential for attracting qualified personnel, retaining experienced employees, improving job satisfaction, and enhancing service delivery within the state's public sector.

Notwithstanding the importance of reward administration, the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service continues to face several human resource management challenges. Reports of delayed promotions, inadequate recognition of outstanding performance, limited training opportunities, disparities in reward allocation, poor welfare programmes, insufficient performance-based incentives, and declining employee motivation have continued to attract attention among scholars and public administration practitioners. These issues have the potential to reduce employee commitment, weaken organizational productivity, and undermine the effectiveness of government policy implementation if not adequately addressed. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated that effective reward administration positively influences employee motivation, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance across both public and private organizations. For instance, Armstrong and Brown (2022) observed that organizations with equitable and performance-based reward systems record higher employee engagement and improved productivity. Similarly, Milkovich et al. (2020) concluded that reward systems aligned with organizational objectives contribute significantly to employee retention, organizational effectiveness, and sustainable performance. However, evidence from many developing countries indicates that institutional weaknesses, political interference, inadequate funding, inconsistent implementation of compensation policies, and weak performance management systems often constrain the effectiveness of reward administration within public organizations.

Against this background, this study examines the relationship between reward administration and employee job performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. Specifically, the study seeks to determine how financial and non-financial reward practices influence employee performance, motivation, commitment, and service delivery.

Specific Objective

I. To assess the relationship between promotion practices and employee organizational commitment in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.
II. To evaluate the relationship between employee recognition and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Research Questions

I. What relationship exists between promotion practices and employee organizational commitment in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service?
II. What relationship exists between employee recognition and service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service?

Research Hypotheses

I. Timely Promotion practices tend to promote employee job commitment in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

II. Employee recognition is likely to enhance service delivery in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Reward Administration

Reward administration is a fundamental function of human resource management that involves the systematic design, implementation, coordination, and evaluation of policies and practices used to compensate, recognize, motivate, and retain employees in an organization. It encompasses both financial and non-financial rewards that are strategically aligned with organizational goals to encourage desired employee behaviours, improve job performance, and enhance organizational effectiveness. Rather than merely determining employee pay, reward administration integrates compensation, benefits, recognition, career development, promotion, and work-life balance into a comprehensive framework that supports employee motivation and organizational success (Armstrong & Brown, 2022).

Contemporary organizations increasingly recognize that effective reward administration constitutes a strategic mechanism for achieving competitive advantage through human capital. According to Armstrong and Brown (2022), reward administration comprises the formulation and implementation of reward strategies, policies, and processes that recognize employee contributions while simultaneously promoting individual, team, and organizational performance. The authors emphasize that reward administration should be guided by principles of fairness, consistency, transparency, and equity to ensure that employees perceive organizational rewards as legitimate and motivating. Similarly, Milkovich, Newman, and Gerhart (2020) describe reward administration as the process through which organizations determine the value of jobs, establish equitable compensation structures, administer employee benefits, and design incentive systems that reinforce organizational objectives. They argue that an effective reward system aligns employee contributions with organizational goals while supporting employee retention and long-term organizational performance.

The strategic significance of reward administration has continued to expand as organizations increasingly rely on knowledge-based employees whose motivation cannot be sustained solely through monetary compensation. Gerhart and Fang (2015) observed that although financial rewards remain important, organizations that combine monetary incentives with career development opportunities, recognition programmes, flexible work arrangements, and supportive organizational cultures generally achieve higher levels of employee engagement and productivity. This perspective reflects the evolution of reward management from a narrow focus on wages and salaries to the broader concept of total rewards, which integrates financial compensation with intrinsic rewards that satisfy employees' psychological and professional needs (WorldatWork, 2021).

Reward administration is also viewed as a motivational tool that strengthens employees' willingness to contribute meaningfully toward organizational objectives. According to Aguinis (2019), employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of commitment, innovation, and productivity when organizational reward systems recognize outstanding performance and provide opportunities for professional growth. Likewise, Dessler (2020) maintained that reward administration reinforces desirable employee behaviour by establishing a direct connection between performance and rewards, thereby encouraging employees to sustain high levels of effort and organizational commitment.

An important characteristic of reward administration is its multidimensional nature. It extends beyond direct financial compensation to include intrinsic rewards such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, autonomy, career advancement, meaningful work, and opportunities for learning and development. Armstrong and Taylor (2023) argued that employees derive motivation from both tangible and intangible rewards because modern employees increasingly value career progression, organizational recognition, work-life balance, and personal fulfilment alongside competitive salaries. Consequently, organizations that adopt integrated reward strategies are better positioned to attract, motivate, and retain highly competent employees.

The effectiveness of reward administration depends largely on employees' perceptions of fairness and equity. This argument is supported by Equity Theory, which suggests that employees compare the rewards they receive with those received by others performing similar work. Where employees perceive fairness in compensation and recognition, they are likely to demonstrate greater job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and improved performance. Conversely, perceived inequity may result in dissatisfaction, absenteeism, reduced productivity, and employee turnover (Greenberg, 2011). Similarly, Expectancy Theory posits that employees are motivated when they believe that increased effort will result in improved performance and that such performance will be rewarded appropriately (Vroom, 1964). These theoretical perspectives underscore the importance of transparent and equitable reward administration in enhancing employee motivation and organizational effectiveness.

Within the public sector, reward administration performs an even more strategic role because government organizations depend on committed and competent employees to deliver public services efficiently. The International Labour Organization (2022) observed that public institutions with equitable compensation systems, performance-based incentives, and effective employee recognition programmes generally experience higher employee morale, stronger organizational commitment, and improved service delivery. However, many developing countries continue to face challenges such as inadequate funding, inconsistent implementation of compensation policies, delayed promotions, political interference, and weak performance management systems, all of which undermine the effectiveness of reward administration and reduce employee productivity.

In Nigeria, reward administration has remained a major concern within the public service owing to persistent challenges relating to irregular promotions, inadequate welfare packages, delayed salary adjustments, limited career advancement opportunities, and disparities in compensation across government institutions. These challenges have contributed to declining employee morale, industrial disputes, labour turnover, and reduced public sector performance (National Salaries, Incomes and Wages Commission [NSIWC], 2023). Consequently, contemporary public sector reforms increasingly emphasize the need for transparent, equitable, performance-based, and sustainable reward administration systems capable of improving employee motivation and enhancing organizational performance.

Table 1: A REWARDS FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVED PERFORMANCE

Category	Individual-Focused Rewards	Group/Team-Focused Rewards
Non-Financial Rewards	I. Personal acknowledgment II. Reduction of the obstacles to work III. Giving out more exciting or hard-to-solve tasks iv. Handing over responsibility and authority v. Opportunities for career advancement and personal growth	I. Praise in public II. Removal of obstacles to job completion iii. Accountability delegation iv. Allocation of challenging and innovative projects v. Team awards
Financial Rewards	I. Direct pay incentives ii. Salary increases iii. Performance-linked compensation iv. Promotion opportunities v. Rewards for staff suggestions	ii. Reward financial incentives based on team effort ii. Cost savings or user fees should be used flexibly iii. Distributions from the pooled/discretionary fund

Source: Wholey (1983)

Key Components of an Effective Reward Management System

An effective reward management system consists of integrated policies and practices designed to motivate employees while supporting organizational objectives. According to Armstrong and Brown (2022), reward management should be strategically aligned with organizational goals, employee expectations, and labour market conditions. A well-designed reward system enhances employee motivation, improves retention, and strengthens organizational performance. One essential component is competitive and equitable compensation, which ensures that employees receive fair remuneration relative to their qualifications, responsibilities, performance, and prevailing market conditions. Equity in compensation promotes job satisfaction and reduces turnover intentions (Milkovich et al., 2020). Another important component is performance-based rewards, whereby promotions, bonuses, incentives, and merit pay are linked directly to employee performance. Aguinis (2019) argued that performance-based rewards reinforce desirable behaviours, encourage accountability, and improve productivity by recognizing outstanding performance.

Recognition and appreciation also constitute a vital aspect of reward management. Non-financial recognition, including commendation letters, awards, public acknowledgement, and employee-of-the-month programmes, enhances employees' sense of value and belonging within the organization (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Furthermore, employee welfare and benefits are indispensable components of reward management. These include health insurance, pension schemes, paid leave, flexible work arrangements, and employee assistance programmes that improve employees' well-being and work-life balance. According to Dessler (2020), comprehensive welfare packages contribute significantly to employee commitment and organizational loyalty.

Career development opportunities, including promotion, mentoring, professional training, and continuous learning, also strengthen employee motivation by providing opportunities for advancement and skill acquisition. Organizations that invest in employee development are more likely to retain talented employees and sustain long-term organizational performance (Noe, 2020). Finally, an effective reward management system should be characterized by transparency, fairness, flexibility, and periodic evaluation. Open communication regarding reward policies, consistent application of compensation procedures, and regular reviews ensure that reward systems remain competitive, equitable, and responsive to changing organizational and employee needs (WorldatWork, 2021).

Empirical Literature

Edet, Ebong, and Utok (2023) examined the relationship between reward administration and workers' performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service using a survey research design. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analysed with descriptive statistics and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that financial and non-financial rewards, including prompt salary payment, merit-based promotion, employee recognition, and welfare packages, significantly enhanced employee commitment, productivity, and overall performance. The study recommended a transparent, equitable, performance-based reward system. However, the present study specifically examines financial rewards, incentives, promotion, and employee welfare as determinants of employee job performance.

Milkovich, Newman, and Gerhart (2020) synthesized findings from numerous organizational studies to examine how compensation systems influence employee performance across public and private organizations. Drawing on evidence from multiple empirical investigations, the authors found that organizations implementing equitable compensation structures, performance-based incentives, and comprehensive employee benefits consistently recorded higher employee motivation, commitment, retention, and productivity. They concluded that effective compensation systems produce positive behavioural outcomes when employees perceive fairness and transparency in reward allocation. The authors recommended that organizations integrate financial and non-financial rewards into comprehensive compensation strategies aligned with organizational objectives. The study provides broad international evidence, whereas the present study focuses specifically on reward administration and employee job performance within the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Armstrong and Brown (2022) examined evidence from several organizations regarding reward management practices and employee performance. Their review found that organizations with integrated reward systems comprising competitive salaries, recognition programmes, career development opportunities, and employee welfare policies achieved higher employee engagement and organizational performance than organizations relying solely on financial compensation. The authors concluded that strategic reward management contributes significantly to employee retention, job satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. They recommended aligning reward systems with organizational strategy and employee expectations. Unlike their broad international perspective, the present study investigates the practical application of reward administration within the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Dessler (2020) synthesized empirical evidence on human resource management practices affecting employee performance. The review found that equitable compensation, promotion based on merit, employee recognition, and comprehensive welfare packages positively influence employee motivation and productivity. The study further established that employees demonstrate stronger organizational commitment when rewards are administered fairly and consistently. Dessler recommended that organizations adopt transparent reward systems linked to measurable employee performance. While the study examined general human resource practices across different sectors, the present study specifically focuses on reward administration in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Noe (2020) examined empirical evidence on employee development and organizational performance. The study found that organizations investing in employee training, career development, mentoring, and promotion opportunities experienced significant improvements in employee competence, productivity, and organizational commitment. Employees viewed professional development as an intrinsic reward that enhanced motivation and career satisfaction. The study recommended continuous investment in learning and development as an integral component of reward management. The present study complements this finding by examining employee welfare and promotion as dimensions of reward administration.

The International Labour Organization (2022) examined wage policies and employee welfare across several countries. The report found that equitable remuneration, timely salary payments, employee benefits, and effective social protection significantly improved employee motivation, productivity, and organizational stability. Conversely, delayed salaries and poor welfare packages reduced morale and service delivery, particularly within the public sector. The report recommended comprehensive reward reforms that integrate fair compensation with employee welfare programmes. The study provides international evidence, whereas the present research examines these relationships within the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

WorldatWork (2021) reviewed organizational reward practices across different industries and countries. The report established that organizations implementing total reward strategies-including competitive compensation, employee recognition, career development, flexible work arrangements, and employee well-being initiatives experienced higher employee engagement, retention, and productivity. The report concluded that reward systems should address employees' financial, professional, and psychological needs simultaneously. It recommended regular evaluation of reward policies to ensure alignment with organizational goals and employee expectations. While the report adopts an international perspective, the present study applies similar reward dimensions within the context of the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the degree to which employees effectively and efficiently executes their assigned duties and responsibilities to achieve organizational goals and objectives.

It encompasses the quality, quantity, timeliness, and effectiveness of work accomplished by employees in line with established organizational standards. According to Aguinis (2019), employee performance is the behaviour and results that employees exhibit, which contribute to the attainment of organizational objectives. Similarly, Robbins and Judge (2022) define employee performance as the extent to which employees successfully accomplish assigned tasks in terms of quality, quantity, timeliness, and effectiveness while making optimal use of available organizational resources. In the public sector, employee performance reflects the ability of civil servants to provide efficient, effective, timely, and quality public services that meet citizens' expectations while complying with organizational policies and procedures (Armstrong, 2023).

Employee performance is multidimensional and comprises several interrelated components. One major component is quality of work, which refers to the accuracy, reliability, thoroughness, and professional standard with which employees perform their assigned responsibilities. High-quality work minimizes errors, enhances customer satisfaction, and improves organizational effectiveness (Robbins & Judge, 2022). Another important component is quantity of output, which measures the volume of work completed within a specified period and reflects employees' ability to achieve expected work targets efficiently (Armstrong, 2023). Timeliness is equally essential, as high-performing employee's complete tasks within established deadlines, thereby improving organizational efficiency and service delivery (Armstrong, 2023).

Furthermore, efficiency represents employees' ability to utilize organizational resources such as time, finances, materials, and effort optimally to achieve maximum results with minimal waste (Daft, 2021). Closely related is effectiveness, which focuses on the extent to which employees achieve predetermined organizational goals and produce desired outcomes rather than merely completing assigned activities (Robbins & Judge, 2022). Attendance and reliability also constitute critical dimensions of employee performance because punctual, dependable, and committed employees ensure continuity of operations and sustained organizational effectiveness (Mathis et al., 2017). In addition, innovation and initiative reflect employees' willingness to generate creative ideas, solve workplace problems, and improve work processes, thereby enhancing organizational competitiveness and service delivery (Armstrong, 2023). Finally, goal achievement represents the extent to which employees accomplish assigned responsibilities and performance targets, serving as the ultimate indicator of effective employee performance within an organization (Aguinis, 2019).

Reward System and Employee Performance: The Nexus

The relationship between reward systems and employee performance has received considerable attention in human resource management literature because of its importance in improving organizational productivity and achieving strategic objectives. Reward systems comprise both financial and non-financial incentives designed to recognize employee contributions, motivate desirable work behaviour, and enhance organizational commitment. Employee performance, on the other hand, refers to the extent to which employees effectively execute assigned responsibilities to achieve organizational goals (Armstrong & Brown, 2022).

The nexus between reward systems and employee performance is founded on the premise that employees are more likely to exert greater effort when they perceive that their contributions will be recognized and rewarded appropriately. This relationship is well explained by the Expectancy Theory of Motivation, which posits that employees become motivated when they believe that increased effort will lead to improved performance and that such performance will result in valued rewards (Vroom, 1964). Consequently, organizations that establish transparent and equitable reward systems are more likely to experience improved employee productivity, commitment, and organizational effectiveness. Similarly, Milkovich, Newman, and Gerhart (2020) argued that effective reward systems enhance employee motivation by linking compensation directly to performance, thereby encouraging employees to achieve organizational objectives. They further noted that reward systems encompassing competitive salaries, performance incentives, recognition, promotion opportunities, and employee benefits significantly influence job performance and retention. Likewise, Dessler (2020) maintained that employees who perceive organizational rewards as fair and equitable are more committed to their organizations and demonstrate higher levels of productivity.

The effectiveness of reward systems also depends on employees' perceptions of organizational justice. According to Greenberg (2011), perceived fairness in reward allocation strengthens employee trust, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction, whereas perceived inequity may result in reduced motivation, absenteeism, and turnover intentions. This perspective is consistent with Adams' Equity Theory, which emphasizes that employees continuously compare their rewards with those of others and adjust their behaviour based on these comparisons. Furthermore, contemporary studies have shown that reward systems are most effective when they combine intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. While financial rewards satisfy employees' economic needs, intrinsic rewards such as recognition, career advancement, meaningful work, and professional development foster long-term commitment and sustained performance (Deci et al., 2017). Consequently, organizations that adopt integrated reward strategies are better positioned to enhance employee performance, strengthen organizational commitment, and achieve sustainable organizational success.

Incentives and Workers' Performance: An Overview

Incentives constitute one of the most important components of reward management because they directly influence employees' willingness to exert greater effort toward achieving organizational objectives. Incentives are performance-based rewards provided to employees in recognition of exceptional performance, increased productivity, innovation, or outstanding contributions. They may be financial, including bonuses, commissions, profit-sharing, and merit pay, or non-financial, such as recognition awards, career advancement, training opportunities, and flexible work arrangements (Milkovich et al., 2020). Financial incentives remain one of the strongest motivators of employee performance because they provide immediate economic benefits and reinforce desirable work behaviours. According to Dessler (2020), employees are generally motivated to improve performance when compensation is directly linked to measurable outcomes. Similarly, Armstrong and Brown (2022) observed that performance-related incentive systems encourage employees to exceed established performance standards while simultaneously promoting organizational productivity and competitiveness.

Non-financial incentives are equally important in sustaining long-term employee motivation. Recognition, professional development, promotion opportunities, participation in decision-making, and supportive supervision contribute significantly to employees' psychological satisfaction and organizational commitment. Deci et al. (2017) argued that employees whose intrinsic motivational needs are satisfied demonstrate higher levels of creativity, engagement, and sustained job performance than those motivated solely by financial rewards. Empirical evidence equally supports the positive relationship between incentives and employee performance. Aguinis (2019) noted that organizations implementing well-designed performance-based incentive programmes generally experience improvements in employee productivity, service quality, innovation, and retention. However, the effectiveness of incentives depends on their perceived fairness, transparency, and alignment with organizational objectives. Incentive systems that are inconsistently implemented or perceived as inequitable may reduce employee morale and undermine organizational performance (Greenberg, 2011).

Promotion, Employee Recognition and Employee Performance in Organizations: An Assessment

Promotion and employee recognition are important dimensions of reward administration that significantly influence employee performance in organizations. Promotion refers to the advancement of an employee from one position to a higher one with increased responsibilities, authority, status, and remuneration. Employee recognition, on the other hand, is the formal or informal acknowledgement and appreciation of employees' contributions, achievements, effort, and commitment through both monetary and non-monetary means. Although promotion often serves as a form of recognition for outstanding performance, recognition extends beyond career advancement to include praise, awards, commendation letters, certificates of excellence, public appreciation, and other forms of acknowledgment that reinforce desirable work behaviour. Together, promotion and recognition satisfy employees' needs for achievement, esteem, and career development, thereby improving motivation, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2023).

Promotion serves both as a reward for past accomplishments and as an incentive for future performance. It motivates employees by creating opportunities for career advancement, professional development, enhanced social status, and improved financial well-being. According to Dessler (2020), employees are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of motivation, commitment, and job performance when promotion decisions are based on merit, transparency, and fairness. Likewise, Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, and Wright (2021) argued that employees are encouraged to acquire new knowledge, improve their competencies, and contribute more effectively to organizational objectives when they perceive clear opportunities for career progression.

Employee recognition complements promotion by providing immediate and continuous appreciation for employees' contributions irrespective of promotional opportunities. Recognition may be expressed through verbal commendation, appreciation letters, employee-of-the-month awards, certificates of excellence, public acknowledgment, performance bonuses, or other forms of positive reinforcement. Armstrong and Brown (2022) noted that recognition strengthens employee morale, increases work engagement, and reinforces behaviours that contribute to organizational success. Similarly, Nelson (2017) emphasized that employees who receive timely and meaningful recognition feel valued by their organizations, resulting in increased motivation, stronger commitment, higher job satisfaction, and improved performance.

The effectiveness of both promotion and recognition depends largely on employees' perceptions of fairness, consistency, and transparency in their administration. Greenberg (2011) maintained that employees who perceive organizational reward practices as equitable are more satisfied with their jobs, exhibit stronger organizational commitment, and demonstrate superior performance. Conversely, delayed promotions, favouritism, biased recognition practices, or the failure to acknowledge employees' efforts may reduce morale, diminish trust in management, lower productivity, and increase turnover intentions. Furthermore, promotion and recognition contribute to employee performance by fostering continuous learning, innovation, and professional competence. Employees promoted to higher positions often receive additional leadership responsibilities, specialized training, and opportunities to develop managerial and technical skills that enhance their effectiveness. Likewise, employees who are consistently recognized for excellent performance are encouraged to sustain high standards, demonstrate initiative, and exceed organizational expectations. Armstrong and Brown (2022) observed that organizations with structured career progression and employee recognition programmes are better positioned to retain talented employees, strengthen succession planning, and improve organizational effectiveness.

Within the public sector, timely promotion and effective employee recognition are particularly important because they reinforce employees' confidence in organizational policies and motivate civil servants to provide efficient and quality public services. The International Labour Organization (2022) observed that transparent promotion systems, combined with equitable employee recognition practices, enhance employee motivation, improve service delivery, and strengthen institutional effectiveness. Consequently, public organizations such as the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service should institutionalize objective, merit-based promotion systems alongside formal employee recognition programmes that consistently acknowledge exceptional performance, dedication, and innovation. Such practices are likely to improve employee performance, strengthen organizational commitment, and enhance overall public service delivery.

Challenges of Effective Reward Management System in Nigeria's Civil Service: An Overview

Reward management within the civil service is confronted with numerous challenges that undermine employee motivation, job satisfaction, and organizational performance. Although reward systems are intended to promote fairness, recognize performance, and improve productivity, their effectiveness in many public sector organizations, particularly in developing countries, is constrained by institutional, financial, and administrative weaknesses. According to Armstrong and Brown (2022), ineffective reward management practices often result from poor policy implementation, inadequate funding, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and weak governance structures, all of which reduce the motivational value of organizational rewards. One of the major challenges facing reward management in the civil service is inequitable remuneration. Employees performing similar duties frequently receive different levels of compensation due to disparities in salary structures, allowances, or implementation of remuneration policies. Such inequalities often generate dissatisfaction, reduce employee morale, and weaken organizational commitment. Milkovich, Newman, and Gerhart (2020) observed that perceptions of inequitable pay significantly diminish employee motivation and may encourage absenteeism, turnover intentions, and reduced productivity.

Another critical challenge is the lack of merit-based promotion. In many public organizations, promotion decisions are sometimes influenced by political considerations, favoritism, or seniority rather than employee competence and performance. Armstrong and Taylor (2023) argued that promotion systems lacking transparency and merit discourage high-performing employees, weaken trust in management, and reduce employees' willingness to exert additional effort. Merit-based promotion remains essential for sustaining employee motivation and enhancing organizational effectiveness. The absence of objective performance evaluation systems also limits the effectiveness of reward administration. Effective reward management requires reliable performance appraisal mechanisms capable of identifying outstanding employees and linking rewards directly to measurable performance outcomes. Aguinis (2019) emphasized that performance-based rewards can only achieve their intended objectives when supported by fair, consistent, and objective performance appraisal systems. Without credible evaluation procedures, employees may perceive reward decisions as subjective and inequitable.

Similarly, inadequate training and career development opportunities constitute a major challenge to reward management in the civil service. Employee development is increasingly regarded as an intrinsic reward that enhances competence, motivation, and career progression. According to Noe (2020), organizations that invest in continuous learning and professional development experience higher employee engagement, improved job performance, and stronger organizational commitment. Conversely, limited access to training reduces employees' opportunities for advancement and negatively affects service delivery. Another persistent problem is the delay in salary and benefit payments, which undermines employees' financial security and reduces their confidence in the organization. Timely payment of salaries and entitlements is fundamental to maintaining employee motivation and organizational commitment. The International Labour Organization (2022) noted that delayed wages and irregular payment of employee benefits often contribute to low morale, financial stress, industrial disputes, and declining productivity within public institutions. Furthermore, corruption, lack of transparency, and bureaucratic inefficiencies continue to weaken reward management in many civil service organizations. Practices such as payroll fraud, favouritism, manipulation of promotion processes, and poor accountability reduce employees' trust in organizational policies and undermine the credibility of reward systems. Transparency International (2023) observed that weak governance structures and limited accountability mechanisms often compromise public sector human resource management, thereby reducing employee confidence and institutional effectiveness.

The civil service also faces challenges associated with limited employee recognition and participation in reward decisions. Recognition programmes remain underdeveloped in many public organizations despite evidence that non-financial recognition significantly improves employee motivation and organizational commitment. Armstrong and Brown (2022) argued that recognizing employees' achievements through commendations, awards, and public appreciation strengthens positive work behaviour and reinforces organizational values. Likewise, involving employees in the formulation and review of reward policies enhances perceptions of fairness and improves acceptance of reward management practices.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Expectancy Theory developed by Victor H. Vroom in 1964. The theory is one of the most influential motivation theories in organizational behaviour and provides a useful framework for explaining how reward administration influences employee job performance. Expectancy Theory postulates that employees are motivated to exert greater effort when they believe that their effort will lead to improved performance, that improved performance will result in desirable rewards, and that the rewards offered are valuable enough to satisfy their personal needs (Vroom, 1964). According to Vroom (1964), employee motivation is determined by three interrelated components: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy refers to an employee's belief that increased effort will lead to improved job performance. Employees are more likely to work diligently when they possess the necessary skills, resources, and organizational support to perform their duties effectively. Instrumentality represents the employee's belief that good performance will be recognized and rewarded by the organization. Employees become more committed when they perceive that promotions, incentives, recognition, and financial rewards are administered fairly and consistently. Valence refers to the value employees attach to the expected rewards. Rewards such as salary increases, bonuses, promotions, recognition, career advancement, and welfare benefits are likely to motivate employees only when they are perceived as meaningful and capable of satisfying individual needs (Vroom, 1964).

The theory argues that motivation is not solely determined by employees' needs but by their expectations regarding the outcomes of their actions. In other words, employees consciously evaluate whether the effort they invest in their work will produce satisfactory performance and whether such performance will be rewarded appropriately (Lunenburg, 2011). When these expectations are positive, employees are more willing to improve their productivity, commitment, and organizational citizenship behaviours. Conversely, where employees perceive that outstanding performance is not recognized or rewarded fairly, motivation declines, leading to reduced productivity, absenteeism, and low organizational commitment (Pinder, 2014). Expectancy Theory has received considerable empirical support within human resource management and organizational behaviour literature. For instance, Armstrong and Taylor (2023) argue that effective reward management systems strengthen employee motivation by establishing a transparent relationship between performance and rewards. Similarly, Noe et al. (2021) contend that organizations that align compensation, promotion, recognition, and employee welfare with measurable performance standards achieve higher employee commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational effectiveness. Likewise, Dessler (2020) maintains that reward systems are most effective when employees clearly understand how their performance influences organizational rewards and career advancement opportunities.

The theory is particularly relevant to the present study because it explains the behavioural mechanisms through which reward administration affects employee job performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The independent variables of this study financial rewards, incentives, promotion, and employee welfare represent organizational rewards that employees expect to receive in return for effective job performance. The dependent variable, employee job performance, reflects employees' productivity, efficiency, commitment, and effectiveness in service delivery. When civil servants perceive that promotions are merit-based, salaries are paid promptly, incentives are fairly distributed, and welfare programmes adequately address their needs, they are more likely to increase their effort and improve their job performance. However, where reward systems are perceived as unfair, inconsistent, or influenced by favoritism, employees' expectancy, instrumentality, and valence diminish, resulting in lower motivation and reduced organizational performance. Although Expectancy Theory remains one of the most widely applied theories of work motivation, it has attracted criticism. Critics argue that the theory assumes employees are rational decision-makers capable of objectively evaluating probabilities and outcomes before deciding how much effort to exert. In reality, employee behaviour is also influenced by emotions, organizational politics, leadership style, personality, and workplace culture, factors that are not adequately captured by the theory (Robbins & Judge, 2023). Nevertheless, despite these limitations, Expectancy Theory remains highly applicable because it provides a comprehensive explanation of how organizational reward systems influence employee motivation and performance, particularly within public sector organizations where reward administration constitutes a major determinant of employee productivity.

In view of the foregoing, the theory provides an appropriate theoretical foundation for this study because it establishes a logical relationship between reward administration and employee job performance. It explains that civil servants are more likely to perform efficiently when they believe that their efforts will be recognized through equitable financial rewards, incentives, promotion opportunities, and employee welfare programmes. Consequently, the theory offers a suitable framework for examining the relationship between reward administration and employee job performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the relationship between reward administration and employee job performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The descriptive survey design was considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to obtain firsthand information from a representative sample of respondents regarding their opinions, attitudes, and experiences relating to the variables under investigation. The design also provides flexibility in participant selection, instrument development, and data collection while allowing the researcher to describe existing conditions without manipulating the study variables. Data were collected primarily through a structured questionnaire, which served as the principal instrument for gathering quantitative information. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A elicited respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, while Section B contained structured items measuring the dimensions of reward administration and employee job performance using a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The study was conducted in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service, which was established following the creation of Akwa Ibom State in 1987.. The study population comprised 1,248 employees drawn from the Ministry of Economic Development (307 staff), Ministry of Education (413 staff), Ministry of Information and Strategy (317 staff), and the Civil Service Commission (211 staff). Using the Taro Yamane (1967) formula at a 5% level of precision, a sample size of 303 respondents was determined.

The respondents were selected through a combination of stratified sampling and simple random sampling techniques. Stratified sampling ensured adequate representation of the selected ministries and the Civil Service Commission, while simple random sampling provided every employee within each stratum an equal opportunity of selection. Out of the 303 questionnaires administered, 290 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 95.7%, and these formed the basis of the analysis. Data for the study were obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were generated through the questionnaire, while secondary data were obtained from textbooks, scholarly journals, government publications, conference papers, official reports, and other relevant academic materials. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity through expert evaluation by specialists in Public Administration and research methodology, whose observations and recommendations were incorporated before the instrument was administered. To determine the consistency of the instrument, a Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was conducted, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.96, which indicates a very high level of internal consistency and confirms that the instrument was reliable for the study. Data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts and percentages, were used to analyse respondents' demographic characteristics and research questions, while the hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using the Chi-square (χ^2) statistical technique. The Chi-square statistic was computed using the formula:

Chi^2= (f_o-f_e) ^2

{f_e}

where χ^2 represents the Chi-square value, f_o denotes the observed frequency, and f_e represents the expected frequency. The decision rule was that the null hypothesis would be rejected whenever the calculated Chi-square value exceeded the critical table value; otherwise, it would be accepted. Despite careful planning, the study encountered certain limitations, including bureaucratic procedures within the Civil Service that delayed access to some respondents, respondents' initial suspicion that the study was government-sponsored, limited availability of current local literature on reward administration, and financial constraints associated with printing questionnaires, transportation, communication, and acquisition of research materials. Nevertheless, these challenges did not significantly affect the overall quality of the study as adequate data were successfully collected and analyzed. Finally, the study strictly adhered to established research ethics by ensuring voluntary participation, obtaining informed consent, guaranteeing respondents' anonymity and confidentiality, respecting participants' rights and dignity, and observing academic integrity through proper acknowledgment of all sources consulted. These ethical principles ensured the credibility, transparency, and trustworthiness of the entire research process.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The primary data gathered for the study were analyzed based on the opinion of the respondents. The chi-square statistical method was adopted for the analysis.

Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Frequency (290)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	158	54.48
Female	132	45.51
Age (Years)		
18-22	32	11.03
23-27	61	21.03
28-32	88	30.34
33 and Above	109	37.58
Educational Qualification		
SSCE	57	19.65
OND. /HND	96	33.10
BSc	104	35.86
MSc and Above	33	11.37
Respondents by Ministries		
Economic Development	69	23.79

Education	74	25.51
Information and Strategy	71	24.48
Civil Service Commission	76	26.20

Source: Field Survey (2024)

The table below presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The distribution by sex shows that 158 respondents (54.48%) were male, while 132 respondents (45.52%) were female, indicating that males constituted the majority of the respondents. The age distribution reveals that 32 respondents (11.03%) were between 18 and 22 years, 61 respondents (21.03%) were within the 23–27 years age bracket, 88 respondents (30.34%) were between 28 and 32 years, while 109 respondents (37.58%) were 33 years and above, suggesting that most respondents were mature and experienced employees. Furthermore, the distribution based on educational qualification indicates that 57 respondents (19.65%) possessed SSCE certificates, 96 respondents (33.10%) held OND/HND qualifications, 104 respondents (35.86%) possessed Bachelor's degrees (B.Sc. or equivalent), while 33 respondents (11.37%) had Master's degrees or other higher professional qualifications. This implies that the majority of the respondents possessed tertiary education. The distribution of respondents across the selected ministries and the Civil Service Commission shows that 69 respondents (23.79%) were drawn from the Ministry of Economic Development, 74 respondents (25.51%) from the Ministry of Education, 71 respondents (24.48%) from the Ministry of Information and Strategy, and 76 respondents (26.20%) from the Civil Service Commission, indicating that the respondents were fairly distributed across the selected public sector institutions.

Testing of Hypothesis I

H_o: Promotion does not tend to have significance impact on job satisfaction in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

H_i: Promotion tends to have significance impact on job satisfaction in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Table 2 Distribution of the Observed and Expected Frequencies for Hypothesis Two

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	Prompt promotion of workers leads to job satisfaction in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.	101 (34.82)	148 51.03)	29 (10)	12 (4.15)	290
2.	Promotion arrears of staff of the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service are not always paid on time.	111 (38.27)	136 (46.89)	34 (11.72)	9 (3.16)	290
3.	Promotion of staff in the civil service is done on merit and as at when due.	79 (27.24)	99 34.13)	63 (21.72)	49 (16.89)	290
	Total	**291**	**383**	**126**	**70**	**870**

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Result

Fo = 870

Fe = 860.97

χ^2 = 74.32

d/f = (r-1) (c-1)

= (4-1) (4-1)

:. 3 x 3 = 9

Critical Value = 16.9

Decision

The finding is that the calculated value of chi-square (kh 2) of 74.32 is lower than the critical value of 16.919 contained in the statistical table at 0.05 level of significance. As a result, the null hypothesis (H 0) which assumes that promotion has no significant effects on job satisfaction in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service (Hi) is rejected.

Hypothesis II

H_o: There is no significance relationship between employee's recognition and workers performance in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

H_i: There is a significance relationship between employee's recognition and workers performance in Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

Table 4.7: Distribution of the Observed and Expected Frequencies for Hypothesis Three

S/N	Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	Employee recognition for outstanding performance motivates civil servants to perform their duties more effectively.	88 (30.34)	135 (46.55)	39 (13.44)	28 (9.65)	290
2.	Regular recognition of employees' achievements improves workers' productivity in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service	36 (12.41)	68 (23.44)	122 42.06)	64 (22.06)	290
3.	Recognition received from supervisors encourages employees to remain committed to achieving organizational goals.	97 (33.44)	142 (48.96)	31 (10.68)	120 (41.37)	290
	Total	**221**	**345**	**192**	**212**	**870**

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Result:

Fo = 870

Fe = 969.96

χ^2 = 293.8

d/f = (r-1) (c-1)

= (4-1) (4-1)

:. 3 x 3 = 9

Critical Value = 16.9

Decision

The analysis shows that the chi-square (kh2) calculated of 74.32 is less than the critical value of 16.919 as indicated in the statistical table at a significance level of 0.05. In turn, the null hypothesis (Ho), according to which promotion does not have a drastic impact on job satisfaction in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service (Hi), has to be rejected.

Discussion of Findings

This section presents a comprehensive discussion of the findings obtained from the analysis of data in relation to the objectives and hypotheses of the study. The study examined the influence of reward administration on employee job performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. Four research objectives and corresponding hypotheses guided the investigation. The hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square (χ^2) statistical technique at the 0.05 level of significance. The results revealed that the calculated Chi-square values for all the hypotheses exceeded their corresponding critical values, leading to the rejection of the null hypotheses and the acceptance of the alternative hypotheses. These findings demonstrate that reward administration significantly influences employee job performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service.

The first hypothesis established that promotion opportunities significantly influence employee job performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The analysis demonstrated that employees who perceive promotional opportunities as timely, transparent, and merit-based are more committed to organizational goals and exhibit higher productivity than those who perceive promotion processes as irregular or unfair. Promotion serves not only as a financial reward but also as an indication of organizational appreciation and career advancement. The finding agrees with the views of Lazear and Gibbs (2018), who argued that promotion serves as a powerful incentive capable of encouraging employees to improve their competencies and productivity in anticipation of future career advancement. Similarly, McCausland, Pouliakas and Theodossiou (2018) reported that fair promotion systems significantly improve employee satisfaction, organizational commitment, and work performance. Armstrong and Taylor (2023) also maintained that merit-based promotion enhances employees' confidence in organizational justice, thereby increasing motivation and improving service delivery. Within the context of the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service, the finding implies that transparent and timely promotion policies remain critical mechanisms for sustaining employee commitment and improving public sector productivity.

The second hypothesis revealed that employee recognition has a significant influence on job performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. The findings indicate that workers who receive recognition for outstanding performance through commendations, awards, appreciation, and public acknowledgement demonstrate higher levels of motivation, commitment, and organizational loyalty than employees whose contributions are rarely recognized. Recognition was found to improve morale, encourage discretionary effort, and strengthen employees' psychological attachment to the organization. This finding supports the views of Frederick Herzberg, who identified recognition as one of the major intrinsic motivators responsible for improved employee performance and job satisfaction. The finding also corroborates the position of Nelson (2017), who argued that employee recognition constitutes one of the most effective and least expensive motivational strategies available to organizations. Likewise, Deci, Olafsen and Ryan (2017) observed that recognition satisfies employees' psychological need for competence and appreciation, thereby increasing intrinsic motivation and work engagement. Armstrong and Brown (2019) further emphasized that organizations with effective recognition programmes generally record higher employee commitment, lower turnover intentions, and improved organizational performance.

Beyond the hypothesis testing, the study identified several challenges affecting reward administration within the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. These include delays in promotion, inadequate financial incentives, perceived inequities in reward distribution, insufficient recognition of outstanding performance, limited opportunities for career development, and bureaucratic bottlenecks in implementing reward policies. These challenges were found to undermine employee morale, reduce organizational commitment, and constrain productivity. The finding agrees with Armstrong and Taylor (2023), who argued that ineffective reward systems often create perceptions of injustice that negatively affect employee behaviour and organizational performance. Similarly, Milkovich et al. (2020) maintained that organizations characterized by inconsistent reward administration frequently experience reduced employee engagement, lower productivity, and higher turnover intentions.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of reward systems on employee performance in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service with particular emphasis on financial rewards, employee recognition, promotion, and employee welfare. The findings revealed that an effective reward system is a critical determinant of employee motivation, commitment, and performance within the public sector. A comprehensive reward structure that integrates both financial and non-financial incentives provides employees with the motivation to perform their duties efficiently, enhances job satisfaction, and strengthens organizational commitment. The study established that prompt payment of salaries and allowances, merit-based promotion, employee recognition, and adequate welfare provisions significantly contribute to improved employee performance. Financial rewards were found to stimulate greater effort and commitment, while non-financial rewards such as recognition, career advancement opportunities, training, and supportive working conditions reinforced employees' sense of value and belonging. These findings support the view that employees perform better when they perceive organizational reward practices as fair, transparent, and equitable.

Furthermore, the study concludes that reward administration should not be limited to monetary compensation alone but should incorporate strategic human resource practices that promote career development, employee participation, effective communication, performance appraisal, and recognition of outstanding contributions. Such an integrated approach will not only improve employee performance but also enhance institutional effectiveness, service delivery, and public confidence in the Akwa Ibom State Civil Service. Consequently, the study affirms that a well-designed reward system remains an indispensable instrument for achieving organizational efficiency and sustainable workforce performance within the public service.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

i. **Strengthen reward administration policies:** The Akwa Ibom State Government should institutionalize a comprehensive reward management policy that combines financial and non-financial incentives. This policy should provide competitive salaries, regular allowances, performance bonuses, employee recognition programmes, and other motivational strategies capable of encouraging innovation, commitment, and high employee performance.

ii. **Ensure merit-based and timely promotion:** Promotion should be conducted regularly based on merit, competence, performance, and years of service in accordance with established civil service regulations. Where promotion is delayed or denied, management should communicate the reasons transparently through appropriate administrative channels. A fair, objective, and transparent promotion system will enhance employee confidence, strengthen organizational justice, and motivate employees to perform optimally.

iii. **Institutionalize employee recognition programmes:** The Civil Service should establish formal employee recognition schemes that acknowledge outstanding performance through commendation letters, certificates of excellence, merit awards, public recognition, and other non-monetary incentives. Regular recognition of exceptional performance will reinforce positive work behaviours, increase morale, and encourage sustained high performance among employees.

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