OFFICE MANAGERS' REWARD STRATEGIES AND PERFORMANANCE OF CONSTRUCTION FIRMS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

Anunike, Phina Ebere
Department of Office Technology and Management, Federal Polytechnic, Oko
e-mail: phinaanunike@gmail.com

Abstract
This study explored the relationship between the Office Managers' reward strategies and Performance of Construction Firms in Delta State. The objective of the study focused on how various dimensions of office managers' reward strategies such as psychological rewards, financial incentives etc. interact with organizational performance in terms of quality project delivery and service timeliness of construction firms in Delta state. The method adopted was cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 4 (four) managers (General Manager, Project Manager, Human Resource Manager and Public Relations Manager) from 25 (twenty-five) licensed and accessible construction firms totally 100 managers as the respondents. Questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. Out of 100 copies distributed, 73 copies only were retrieved. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test postulated hypotheses at P<0.05 alpha level. The result showed that there is correlation and significant positive relationships between psychological rewards, financial incentives etc. and overall organizational performance in construction industry in Delta State. It was concluded that office managers' reward strategies enhance organizational performance of construction firms in Delta state. It was recommended among others that management/leadership team of construction companies should continue to recognize, encourage and give financial incentives to outstanding managers to motivate them and others towards giving their best to the construction industry, etc.
Key words: *Office Manager, Reward Strategies, Construction Firms, Organizational Performance.*

Introduction

The construction industry in Delta State, a rapidly growing center, faces challenges in maintaining high standards of quality and service timeliness amid intense competition and evolving market demands. One promising avenue for construction firms to enhance their organizational performance is the implementation of comprehensive office managers' reward strategies that blend psychological support with financial incentives (Okon & Uko, 2018; Ndulue & Ibe, 2020). Psychological support encompasses a range of strategies aimed at recognizing and valuing office managers' contributions. These include offering clear career paths, providing constructive feedback, and fostering a culture of collaboration and teamwork

(Aguinis *et al.*, 2020). Such an environment can lead to increased job satisfaction, managers' engagement, and commitment to delivering quality work on time.

Financial incentives, such as performance-based bonuses, profit-sharing, and competitive compensation packages, directly motivate managers by rewarding their efforts and achievements. Research has shown that these incentives can significantly impact performance, as managers strive to meet or even exceed performance targets in pursuit of financial rewards (James & Akanbi, 2017; Pawirosumarto *et al.*, 2019). In the context of construction projects, which require precision and strict adherence to specifications and timelines, motivated managers are more likely to contribute to efficient and effective project execution.

Studies have demonstrated that a well-designed reward system can positively affect organizational performance by driving employee motivation and satisfaction, which in turn leads to higher productivity and improved quality and timeliness of projects (Pawirosumarto et al., 2019). For construction firms in Delta state, investing in a comprehensive employee reward system may be key to achieving and sustaining high performance levels in project quality and service timeliness.

Statement of Problem

The construction industry in Delta State is a significant contributor to the city's growth and economic development. Despite its importance, many construction firms in the area face persistent challenges in ensuring high levels of organizational performance, particularly in terms of delivering quality projects and meeting service timeliness.While several studies have explored the impact of employee reward strategies on organizational performance, there is limited research studies specifically focusing on the construction industry in Delta state. In particular, there is a lack of recent empirical evidence examining the relationship between a comprehensive Office managers' reward system—encompassing both psychological support and financial incentives—and its effect on quality projects and service timeliness in construction firms in Delta state. Most available studies on Office managers' reward system and organizational performance have been conducted in other sectors or different geographical areas, which may not accurately reflect the unique challenges and opportunities present in Delta state which is the focused area of this study. Therefore bridging this gap is crucial to this study.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between office managers' reward system and performance in construction firms in Delta state. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. examine the relationship between psychological rewards and the quality of project of construction firms in Delta;

2. ascertain the relationship between psychological rewards and service timeliness of construction firms in Delta;
3. examine the relationship between financial incentives and the quality of project of construction firms in Delta and
4. evaluate the relationship between psychological rewards and service timeliness of construction firms in Delta.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between psychological rewards and the quality of project of construction firms in Delta.

Ho₂: There is no significant relationship between psychological rewards and service timeliness of construction firms in Delta.

Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between financial incentives and the quality of project of construction firms in Delta.

Ho₄: There is no significant relationship between psychological rewards and service timeliness in construction firms in Delta.

Literature and Conceptual Review

The Concept of Office Managers' Reward System

Office managers' reward system is a strategic approach used by organizations to motivate and engage managers by recognizing their contributions and rewarding their performance. This system can have a significant impact on managers' job satisfaction, commitment, and overall productivity, which in turn influences organizational performance. Two key dimensions of an effective office managers' reward system are psychological rewards and financial incentives.

Psychological Rewards

Psychological rewards focus on fulfilling managers' intrinsic needs for recognition, appreciation, and personal growth. These rewards may include praise from Board of companies, opportunities for professional development, and the creation of a positive and supportive work environment. Research indicates that psychological rewards can boost manager's morale and foster a sense of belonging within the organization (Amakom & Chukwuma, 2018). Such rewards enhance manager's engagement and job satisfaction, leading to an improved performance and a stronger connection between employees and their work (Agwu, 2019). In addition to fostering engagement, psychological rewards can positively influence creativity and innovation within the workplace. Managers who feel valued and supported are more likely to contribute ideas and take initiative in their roles (Obi *et al.*, 2019). This is particularly important in construction firms, where problem-solving and adaptability are essential for successful project completion.

Financial Incentives

Financial incentives, on the other hand, provide tangible rewards in the form of monetary benefits such as bonuses, profit-sharing, or performance-based pay. These incentives directly compensate office managers for their efforts and achievements, serving as a powerful motivator for many individuals (Okojie & Obamuyi, 2020). Financial incentives can drive managers to reach specific performance targets and goals, thereby improving overall productivity and efficiency ((Eze *et al.*, 2020; Awe & Yinka, 2021). For organizations operating in competitive industries, maintaining a motivated and stable workforce is crucial for sustained success.

The Concept of Organizational Performance

Organizational performance in construction firms encompasses various aspects, including the successful execution of projects according to high-quality standards and within stipulated time. These two key measures—quality of project delivery and service timeliness—are essential for the success and competitiveness of construction firms (Oladunjoye & Abiodun, 2020; Akinola & Omolehin, 2021). Recent research has emphasized the importance of achieving both quality and timeliness in construction projects to meet clients' expectations and maintain a strong reputation in the industry.

Quality of Project: Quality of project delivery in construction firms refers to the adherence to established standards and specifications, ensuring that projects meet or exceed clients' expectations. High-quality projects not only enhance clients' satisfaction but also contribute to the long-term reputation and success of the construction firm (Akinola & Omolehin, 2021). In a competitive market, quality serves as a differentiator, as clients are more likely to seek out firms with a track record of delivering exceptional projects. To achieve high-quality project delivery, construction firms must invest in skilled labour, implement effective project management practices, and maintain stringent quality control measures. Additionally, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and encouraging staff input can lead to innovative solutions and superior project outcomes (Umeh *et al*., 2019).

Service Timeliness: Service timeliness refers to the ability of construction firms to complete projects within the agreed-upon time. Meeting deadlines is crucial for clients' satisfaction and the firm's reputation, as delays can lead to increased costs, contractual penalties, and potential loss of future business opportunities (Oladunjoye & Abiodun, 2020). Adhering to project schedules also helps maintain good relationships with suppliers and other stakeholders involved in the construction process. To achieve service timeliness, construction firms must employ efficient project planning and scheduling techniques. This includes setting realistic timeliness, allocating appropriate resources, and continuously monitoring progress to identify and address any potential delays (Oluwatosin *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, effective communication among team members and with clients can help manage expectations and ensure that projects stay on track.

Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on the Social Exchange Theory. The Social Exchange Theory was propounded by George Casper Homans in the year 1958 (Olannye, 2014). The Social Exchange Theory postulates that "give and take" forms the basis of almost all relationships though their proportions might vary as per the intensity of the relationships. The Social Exchange Theory is about giving something of more value to others than what has been given to you and also receiving something of higher value than you have given out (Ahiazu & Asuquo, 2016 cited in Okojie & Obamuyi, 2020). Some relevant assumptions of the theory are as follows:

i. In a relationship, every individual has expectations from his/her partners. A relationship without expectations is meaningless. Organizations have expectations from their employees just as employees also have their expectations from management (the organization);
ii. Good relationships are mutually beneficial and not supposed to be one sided. An individual invests his time and energy in relationship only when he gets something of corresponding or higher value from it (Igbinoba & Duru, 2021).

The justification of this theory as the theoretical foundation of this study is predicated on the relevance of the theory in explaining how office manager's reward system interacts with organizational performance. The theory explains that both construction firms (employer) and their office managers (employees) have their own unique expectations in their contractual relationship and that the extent to which these expectations are met will not only influence or determine the quality of relationship but will also impact on organizational performance. Construction firms expect their managers to demonstrate high level performance and commitment towards the achievement of goals and targets. On the other end, their managers expect their employer to provide reasonable reward system, enough to motivate them to work. This theory predicts that provision of reward strategies will motivate construction managers to be more committed to work which will ultimately result to better organizational performance in terms of quality of products and service timeliness.

Empirical Review

There were some empirical studies on the relationships between employee reward and motivation strategies and organizational performance. One notable among them was "The Effect of Financial Incentives on Employee Performance of Construction

Firms in Abuja" by Egwumi and Adedoyin (2019). The study revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between financial incentive and employee performance.

Also in a similar study "The Role of Financial Incentives in Enhancing Construction firms' Performance in Port Harcourt" (Igbinobi and Duru: 2021) also revealed that financial incentives enhance overall construction firm's performance.

In another study by Okwuise et.al (2023) on "Reward System and Organizational Performance", it was revealed that a good reward system provides positive assurance for fulfilling the needs and wants of employees in the workplace. It also showed that it drives the workers to more dedication and commitment in the pursuit of the corporate objectives.

Another study on "Employee Reward System and Corporate Effectiveness" by Victor et. al (2022), revealed that if individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging produts and value,... it stands to increase corporate effectiveness.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research method. Four (4) categories of office managers (General Manager (GM), Project Manager (PM), Human Resource Manager (HRM) and Public Relations Officer - PRO) were drawn from each of 25 (twenty-five) registered and accessible construction firms in Delta state. This gives a total population of 100 office managers as respondents. Of 100 copies of questionnaire administered, 73 (seventy-three) were retrieved. The questionnaire titled "Office Manager's Reward Strategies and Organizational Performance Questionnaire (OMRSOPQ)" was designed using a four-point rating scale format with response options of Strongly Agree(SA) = 4, Agree(A) = 3, Disagree(D)= 2 and Strongly Disagree(SD) = 1. The instrument was face-validated by two research experts in Delta state while Cronbach Alpha was used to ascertain the reliability of the instrument. Hypotheses were tested with Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at $P<0.05$ alpha level.

Results

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between psychological rewards and the quality of project of construction firms in Delta.

Table 1: Correlation between Psychological Rewards and Project Quality

			Psychological Rewards	Quality of Project Result
Pearson	Psychological Rewards	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.476** Rejected
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	73	73
	Quality of Project	Correlation Coefficient	.476**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	73	73

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 1 above reveals a correlation value of 0.476 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating psychological rewards and quality of project. Since the significance value 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho_1) which states that there is no significant relationship between psychological rewards and the quality of project of construction firms in Delta was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This result indicates that there is a moderate positive relationship between psychological rewards and the quality of project of construction firms in Delta.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between psychological rewards and service timeliness of construction firms in Delta.

Table 2: Correlation between Psychological Rewards and Service Timeliness

			Psychological Rewards	**Service Timeliness**	**Result**
Pearson	Psychological Rewards	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.727**	Rejected
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		N	73	73	
	Service Timeliness	Correlation Coefficient	.727**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	
		N	73	73	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 2 above reveals a correlation value of 0.727 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating psychological rewards and service timeliness. Since the significance value 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho_2) which states that there is no significant relationship between psychological rewards and service timeliness of construction firms in Delta was rejected and the alternate accepted. With a correlation value of .0727, the result shows that psychological rewards significantly and strongly enhance the service timeliness of construction firms in Delta.

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between financial incentives and the quality of project of construction firms in Delta.

Table 3: Correlation between Financial Incentives and Project Quality

			Financial Incentives	Quality of Project	Result
Pearson	Financial Incentives	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.823**	Rejected
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		N	73	73	
	Quality of Project	Correlation Coefficient	.823**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	
		N	73	73	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 3 above reveals a correlation value of 0.823 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating financial incentives and quality of project. Since the significance value 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho_3) which states that there is no significant relationship between financial incentives and the quality of project of construction firms in Delta was rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted. This result indicates that financial incentives have a strong positive relationship with the quality of project of construction firms in Delta.

Ho_4: There is no significant relationship between financial incentives and service timeliness of construction firms in Delta.

Table 4: Correlation between Financial Incentives and Service Timeliness

			Financial Incentives	Service Timeliness	Result
Pearson	Financial Incentives	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.831**	Rejected
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	
		N	73	73	
	Service Timeliness	Correlation Coefficient	.831**	1.000	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.
		N	73	73	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*
Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

Table 4 above reveals a correlation value of 0.831 at a significance level of 0.00 which is less than the chosen alpha level of 0.05 for the hypothesis relating financial incentives and service timeliness. Since the significance value 0.00 is less than the alpha level of 0.05, the null hypothesis (Ho_2) which states that there is no significant relationship between financial incentives and service timeliness of construction firms in Delta was rejected and the alternate accepted. With a correlation value of .0831, the result shows that there is a significant strong positive relationship between financial incentives and service timeliness of construction firms in Delta.

Discussion of Findings

Psychological Support and Organizational Performance

The test of hypotheses one and two revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between psychological support and organizational performance of construction firms in Delta. This finding agrees with the findings of Olatunde and Kelechi (2019) who found that recognizing employees' contributions can foster a sense of belonging and loyalty within organizations. This, in turn, leads to increased job satisfaction and motivation, resulting in higher productivity and better quality of project delivery in construction firms.

This finding is also in consonance with the findings of Adegboye and Ojo (2020) who found that by investing in employees' skills and providing training and development programs, construction firms can foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement. This approach not only boosts employees' confidence and competence but also enables them to contribute more effectively to the organization's goals. A supportive work environment that encourages open communication and collaboration is also essential for enhancing organizational performance. When managers feel comfortable sharing ideas and concerns, they are more likely to work together to solve problems and improve processes (Adebayo & Usman, 2021). This collaborative approach can lead to innovative solutions and efficient project execution, benefiting the overall performance of the construction firm.

Financial Incentives and Organizational Performance

The test of hypotheses three and four revealed a significant positive relationship between financial incentives and organizational performance of construction firms in Delta. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Adedokun and Adejare (2021) that financial incentives play a pivotal role in shaping organizational performance. By offering tangible monetary rewards such as bonuses, performance-based pay, and profit-sharing, construction firms can directly motivate their workforce to achieve high levels of productivity and efficiency. This direct form of motivation often leads to enhanced organizational performance through improved quality of projects and adherence to service timelines.

Similarly, this finding aligns with the findings of Oluwatosin and Adeyemi (2019) which showed that staff are rewarded based on their performance, they are more likely to invest effort into their tasks, resulting in better project outcomes. This correlation between financial incentives and employee performance can have a direct impact on the quality of project delivery. A well-structured financial incentive system can encourage managers to strive for excellence in their work, aiming to meet or exceed performance targets set by the firm. In addition to boosting individual productivity, financial incentives can foster a culture of healthy competition and collaboration within the company. For instance, profit-sharing schemes can motivate managers to work together towards the common goal of maximizing the company's profitability (Okeke & Chukwuemeka, 2020). Such collaborative efforts can lead to efficient resource utilization, timely project completion, and overall improved organizational performance.

Conclusion

The interaction between office managers' reward strategies and organizational performance of construction firms in Delta is a dynamic relationship with the potential to significantly enhance quality of projects and service timeliness. When construction firms implement effective reward systems that combine psychological support and financial incentives, they create a motivated and engaged office managerial workforce which leads to a range of positive outcomes for the firm. Psychological support such as recognition, career development opportunities, and a collaborative work environment fosters managers' job satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment resulting in high-quality project delivery and innovative solutions to complex problems.

Financial incentives, such as bonuses, performance-based pay, and profit-sharing, directly reward managers for achieving performance targets and can serve as a powerful motivator. This targeted approach can drive managers to work more efficiently and adhere to project schedules, contributing to the timeliness of services. The synergy between psychological rewards and financial incentives creates a balanced reward system that not only enhances individual manager's motivation but also promotes team cohesion and collaborative efforts. This, in turn, supports efficient resource allocation, reduces project delays, and improves overall project quality of construction firms in Delta state.

Recommendations

Based on the results and discussion of findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Management team/Board of Directors of construction firms should create a workplace culture that values and acknowledges office managers' efforts and achievements. Regularly recognizing them for their hard work, whether through verbal praise, written commendations, or "Manager of the Month" awards, can boost morale and motivation.
2. Construction firms offering managers opportunities for skill-building and career progression can significantly enhance job satisfaction and commitment. Construction firms should invest in training programs, workshops, and mentorship initiatives that enable managers to advance their knowledge and expertise.
3. Leadership of construction firms can establish performance-based incentive programs that directly reward managers for achieving or exceeding set targets. This can include bonuses, profit-sharing, or commission structures tied to project completion and quality metrics. By offering financial rewards for meeting performance goals, firms can motivate managers to work efficiently and strive for excellence in their roles, resulting in improved project quality and adherence to service timelines.
4. Transparency and fairness in the distribution of incentives are crucial for maintaining trust and high morale. Management team of construction firms should clearly communicate the criteria for earning incentives and ensure that these criteria are applied consistently across their company. A transparent incentive system fosters a sense of equity and motivates not only managers but the entire workers to work towards shared organizational goals.

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