

Impact of Motivational Practices on Workforce Performance in the Nigerian Construction Industry

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The Nigerian construction industry is currently confronted with serious challenges relating to employee productivity, a situation that is largely linked to inadequate motivational strategies and poor worker engagement. Therefore, present study examined the impact of motivational practices on workers' performance within the Nigerian construction industry, with the aim of identifying the most effective approaches for improving workforce productivity. To achieve the aim of the study, a quantitative research method was conducted in selected construction firms in Abuja, Nigeria in the year 2024. Structured questionnaire was adopted to obtain data from 135 construction professionals in the quantitative study. The data obtained was analysed using frequency counts, percentages, and Mean Item Scores (MIS). The outcomes of the quantitative study revealed that job enrichment is the most effective motivational technique having mean item score (MIS) of 4.66, followed closely by various pay types (MIS = 4.46) and the implementation of reward systems (MIS = 4.26). In terms of performance indicators, punctuality (MIS = 4.66), work quality (MIS = 4.46), and employee endurance (MIS = 4.40) were identified as key measures. The study concludes that motivational practices in Nigerian construction firms has positive impact on the performance of workers. The study recommends that construction firms should place greater emphasis on job enrichment, competitive compensation, and reward systems in order to boost productivity and achieve improved project outcomes.

Keywords: Motivational techniques, employee performance, Nigerian construction industry, job enrichment, construction workers

Introduction

Employees in any organization are most significant asset, particularly in low-tech labour-intensive sectors like the construction industry (Osabiya, 2015). However, employees are also the most challenging resource for firms to manage (Karanika & Michaelides, 2015). This implies that employees, unlike physical assets, have unique wants and habits that must be supplied and controlled if they are to contribute to organizational growth and development (Osabiya, 2015). Employee turnover is a universal problem that all organizations around the world face (Stanley, 2012). One of the factors that contribute to high employee turnover is motivation (Mosley & Mosley, 2012). There is a growing consensus among managers and leaders about the significance of combining effective motivation incentives to encourage good performance (Cole & Kelly, 2011). It is imperative to note that motivation is a process that starts with a physiological deficiency or need that activates a behaviour or a drive that is aimed at a goal incentive (Muñoz, 2017; Herath, 2017). Motivation is a psychological process initiated by the emergence of needs involving a goal directed action and behaviour aimed at satisfying a particular desire (Chete *et al.*, 2014). Today, organizations are under intense pressure to identify and implement programs that will prove effective in improving employee productivity (Deci, 2013). It is no longer enough to increase salaries and expect increased performance;

it is more complex than that (Jobber & Lee, 2014). For instance, Porter (2016) pointed that workers are motivated when they are rewarded and believe that their efforts are critical to the company's success.

In Nigeria, the common problems of workers' performance in construction have been traced to unfair wages of workers, poor safety in construction sites, lack of clear-cut career paths, diminishing skilled workers training programmes and delay in schedule of works on sites (Oseghale *et al.*, 2015). Building organisation productivity is assumed to be low which is showing on the project results in terms of cost overrun, late delivery in project completion time, and low-quality structures with low life span (Olabosipo & Adedamola, 2010). Based on the reviewed literature, it can be emphasized that inadequate or poor employees' motivation in organizations can lead to poor performance of the employees and the organisation at large. Hence, there are studies on the positive impacts of motivation practices on workers' performance in organizations across the globe. However, when this study was conducted, there seems to be scarce literature on the most significant motivational technique on workers' performance specifically in Nigerian construction industry.

Therefore, this study was conducted to further investigate the impact of motivation techniques on workers' performance in the Nigerian construction industry with a view to determining the best

motivational technique for effective employee performance in construction projects.

Literature Review

Overview of the Nigerian construction industry

The construction industry has a remarkable impact on the GDP, as it contributes between 7-10% to the GDP of most developing countries (World Bank, 2013). In most projects labour can cost up to 50% of the overall project budget (Adedokun *et al.*, 2013). In developing countries, construction involves more workers per activity on site, typically two to ten times as many workers per activity compared to developed countries (Adamu *et al.*, 2011).

Definition of motivation

Several scholars have defined the concept of motivation (Afuye, 2016; Barg *et al.*, 2014). In this study, Anthony (2011) definition is adopted i.e., an incentive, catalyst, stimulant, or driving force that guides an individual's behaviour toward completing a set of objectives in order to fulfil personal needs and achieve organizational goals. It is imperative to note that the word 'motivation' comes from the Latin word '*movere*,' which means 'to move' (Afuye, 2016). Therefore, motivation may be defined as a method of generating internal motivation via the provision of incentives in order to fulfil corporate objectives and satisfy the requirements of employees.

Various forms of motivation in organisations

According to Ganta (2014), numerous approaches are used to favourably affect employee behaviour in order to motivate them to work hard or enhance their performance so as to fulfil the firm's goals, and these techniques must meet certain needs and objectives. These can be summarised as: job enrichment, high monthly package, reward system, care /improve in relationship, evaluation of individual, set tangible goals, measure performance, job rotation, job enlargement, flexible work schedule and the like (Stanley, 2012; Osabiya, 2015; Karanika & Michaelides, 2015; Mosley & Mosley, 2012).

Factors that can be used to measure employees' performance in organizations

Researchers have investigated various methods that can be adopted to measure employees' performance in organizations across the globe. These include cost, time, quality, quantity, knowledge, or creativity of an individual towards the accomplished work that is in harmony with the responsibility during a specific period (Kalsum & Zakaria, 2010). This implies that customer satisfaction in the construction industry is measured by the ability of the construction team to deliver the project within the stipulated time, cost and quality (Madan & Bajwa, 2016). Similarly, Fellows *et al.* (2015), Homberg and Costello (2017) stated that workers' performance can be measured by individuals using combinations of analytical

techniques and personal judgment. Ganta (2014) further identified seven different methods that can be used to measure employees' performance. Among these are level of punctuality to work, personal habits displayed at work and employees work attitude.

Influence of motivations on employees' productivity

Workers performance decline has been widely reported in the construction industry (Aiyetan & Olotuah, 2006). This has led to research on the influence of different motivational techniques on workers' performance (Barg *et al.*, 2014). The argument put forward by Albano (2014) and Barg *et al.* (2014) is whether motivation leads to workers' performance in organizations or not. Hence, Fagbenle *et al.* (2014) conducted a study on the influence of motivating factors on employees' performance and concluded that motivation leads to employees and organization performance.

Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research method to examine the relationship between motivational strategies and employee performance in the Nigerian construction industry. The approach was selected to enable systematic data collection from a large sample of construction professionals while maintaining methodological rigor and generalizability of data.

The target population for the study comprised of construction professionals working in registered construction firms in Abuja, Nigeria's in the year 2024. Abuja was selected as the study location due to its concentration of construction activities and diverse range of project types and firm sizes. Based on the targeted study population, a two-stage sampling approach was adopted. First, registered construction firms with ongoing projects were purposively selected from the Abuja business directory (N = 255 firms). Thereafter, using Krejcie and Morgan's sample size determination table, a representative sample of 135 registered firms was obtained for the study population size. From these registered firms, one professional was randomly selected from their active site to 135 respondents for the questionnaire study.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed specifically for this study. The questionnaire comprised of four main sections: respondent demographics, motivational technique effectiveness, implementation levels, performance measurement factors, and motivational impact assessment. The questionnaire employed 5-point Likert scales to capture respondent perceptions and experiences. Pilot testing was first conducted before the main survey study with five construction professionals. The professionals were randomly selected from one of the study firms. The essence of the pilot study was to identify any ambiguities that may be associated with the designed questionnaire.

The outcome of the pilot study was satisfactory, and the researchers proceeded to the main survey. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distributions, percentages, and Mean Item Scores (MIS). MIS values were interpreted using established criteria: 1.00-1.149 (strongly disagree/very low), 1.50-2.49 (disagree/low), 2.50-3.49 (neutral/moderate), 3.50-4.49 (agree/high), and ≥ 4.50 (strongly agree/very high) (Fisher & Conrad, 2015). The analysis focused on ranking motivational techniques by effectiveness and implementation levels, identifying key performance measurement factors, and assessing the impact of motivational strategies on employee performance outcomes.

Results

The study achieved a response rate of 87% (135 out of 155 targeted respondents). Quantity surveyors represented the largest professional group (41.5%), followed by builders (25.9%), architects (17.8%), and engineers (14.8%). The majority of the respondents had HND/BSc qualifications (48.1%) or MSc degrees (34.1%), indicating a well-educated sample. Respondent age distribution showed concentration in the 25-35 years (40.0%) and 36-45 years (30.4%) categories, representing the core professional workforce. Experience levels were diverse, with the largest group having 11-15 years of construction industry experience (32.6%), followed by those with 1-5 years (22.2%) and over 20 years (18.5%) of experience.

Table 1: Respondent Characteristics

Profile	Statistics	
Profession of Respondents	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Architect	24	17.8
Quantity surveyors	56	41.5
Builders	35	25.9
Engineers	20	14.8
Highest Academic Qualification of Respondents	Frequency	Proportion (%)
OND/NCE	16	11.9
HND/BSc	65	48.1
MSc	46	34.1
PhD	8	5.9
Age Group of Respondents	Frequency	Proportion (%)
Less than 25 years	12	8.9
25 years – 35 years	54	40.0
36 years – 45 years	41	30.4
More than 45 years	28	20.7
Years of Experience of Respondents in the Construction Industry	Frequency	Proportion (%)
1-5 years	30	22.2
6 -10 years	24	17.8
11-15 years	44	32.6
16 - 20 years	12	8.9
>20 years	25	18.5
Total	135	100

Analysis revealed significant variation in perceived effectiveness across different motivational techniques. Job enrichment emerged as the most effective technique (MIS = 4.66), indicating strong agreement among respondents regarding its impact on employee motivation. This was followed by types of pay (MIS = 4.46), implementation of reward systems (MIS = 4.26), and care and relationship

improvement (MIS = 4.20). The top-performing techniques shared common characteristics of providing employees with greater autonomy, recognition, and development opportunities. Conversely, recognizing the importance of employee motivation scored lowest (MIS = 2.93), suggesting a gap between theoretical acknowledgment and practical implementation of motivational principles.

Table 2: Motivational Strategies

Various forms of employee's motivation	MIS	Rank	Decision
Job enrichment	4.66	1st	Very effective
Types of pay	4.46	2nd	Very effective
Implement reward system	4.26	2nd	Very effective
Care and improve in relationship	4.20	4th	Very effective
Evaluation of individual	3.86	5th	Effective
Set tangible goals	3.84	6th	Effective
Measure performance	3.73	7th	Effective
Empowerment	3.60	8th	Effective
Establishing habit	3.59	9th	Effective
Competition	3.56	10 th	Effective
Job enlargement	3.46	11 th	Averagely effective
Flexible work schedule	3.33	12 th	Averagely effective
Show improvement and growth in the firm	3.26	13 th	Averagely effective
Celebrate small success both team and individual	3.13	14 th	Averagely effective
Recognize the importance of employees' motivation	2.93	15 th	Rarely effective
Average MIS	3.67		Effective

Assessment of implementation levels revealed interesting patterns diverging from effectiveness rankings. Empowerment and types of pay tied for highest implementation levels (both MIS = 3.73), followed by flexible work schedules and reward system implementation (both MIS = 3.66). This suggests that some highly effective techniques, such

as job enrichment (MIS = 3.26), are underutilized in practice. Competition emerged as the least implemented motivational technique (MIS = 2.06), indicating potential opportunities for improvement in this area. The overall average implementation score (MIS = 3.27) suggests moderate deployment of motivational techniques across the industry.

Table 3: Implementation Levels of Motivation

Level of implementation	MIS	Rank	Decision
Empowerment	3.73	1st	Implemented
Types of pay	3.73	1st	Implemented
Flexible work schedule	3.66	3 rd	Implemented
Implement reward system	3.66	3 rd	Implemented
Job enlargement	3.60	5th	Implemented
Celebrate small success both team and individual	3.53	6th	Implemented
Set tangible goals	3.46	7th	Implemented
Evaluation of individual	3.40	8th	Implemented
Measure performance	3.33	9th	Implemented
Establishing habit	3.33	9th	Implemented
Recognize the importance of employee's motivation	3.26	11 th	Implemented
Job enrichment	3.26	12 th	Implemented
Show improvement and growth in the firm	3.06	13 th	Implemented
Job rotation	2.93	14 th	Partially Implemented
Care and improve in relationship	2.26	15 th	Partially Implemented
Competition	2.06	16 th	Partially Implemented
Average MIS	3.27		Implemented

Respondents identified several key factors for measuring employee performance in construction projects. Punctuality to work received the highest importance rating (MIS = 4.66), reflecting the time-sensitive nature of construction activities. Work quality/standards followed closely (MIS = 4.46), emphasizing the industry's focus on deliverable excellence.

Other significant performance factors included employee endurance and strength (MIS = 4.40), anxiety levels during work (MIS = 4.20), and patience and endurance ability (MIS = 4.00). These factors highlight the physical and psychological demands of construction work and the importance of worker resilience and adaptability.

Table 4: Motivation Performance Measurement Factors

Factors for measuring employee's performance	MIS	Rank	Decision
The level of punctuality to work	4.66	1 st	Very Significant
The quality/standard of employee's work	4.46	1 st	Significant
Level at which employees get tired in the progress of work (Employees strength)	4.40	3 rd	Significant
The level of employee's anxiety in the progress of work	4.20	4 th	Significant
Employees patience and endurance ability	4.00	5 th	Significant
Frequencies of employees request for information (RFI) on a daily basis	3.93	6 th	Significant
Employees response time	3.80	7 th	Significant
Employees hearing ability during daily activities	3.66	8 th	Significant
Employees sighting ability while work is in progress	3.33	9 th	Moderately Significant
Frequencies of annual sick leaves	3.33	9 th	Moderately Significant
Frequencies of rework in employee's tasks on a daily basis	3.26	10 th	Moderately Significant
Insubordination to organization Policies	3.26	10 th	Moderately Significant
Average MIS	3.86		Significant

In Table 5, it can be observed that respondents strongly agreed that motivational strategies increase daily output quantity (MIS = 4.60), the primary performance indicator for construction activities.

Additionally, motivational approaches were perceived to reduce production costs (MIS = 4.13) and decrease absenteeism rates (MIS = 3.93).

Table 5: Impact of Motivational Strategies on Workers Performance

influence of each motivational technique on the identified factors	MIS	Rank	Decision
Increase the quantity of daily output	4.60	1 st	Agree
It reduces the cost of employee's daily production cost	4.13	1 st	Agree
It reduces employees rate of absenteeism	3.93	3 rd	Agree
Has no any significant impact on employee's daily output	2.46	3 rd	Disagree
It has no significant impact on employee's daily production time	2.33	5 th	Disagree
Reduce the quantity of daily output	2.26	6 th	Disagree
It increased employee's daily production time	2.26	7 th	Disagree
It increases employees rate of absenteeism	2.13	8 th	Disagree
It has no significant impact on employee's rate of absenteeism at work	2.13	9 th	Disagree
It has no significant impact on employee's daily production cost	1.93	9 th	Strongly disagree
It increased the cost of employee's daily production	1.86	11 th	Strongly disagree
It reduces employee's daily production time	1.80	12 th	Strongly disagree
Average MIS	2.65		Disagree

Spearman's rank-order correlation was further conducted to assess the relationship between motivational strategies and workers' performance in Nigerian construction industry (Table 6). There was a strong, positive, and statistically significant correlation between the two variables, $\rho(8) = 1.000$, p

$< .001$. This indicates that with adequate motivations the perceived workers' performance will continue to increase proportionally. This implies that there are strong positive associations between motivational strategies and workers' performance in Nigerian construction industry.

Table 6: Spearman's rank correlation between motivation strategies and workers performance

Statistic	Value
Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient (ρ)	1
p-value	< 0.001

Discussion of Results

This study provides key insights into the relationship between motivational strategies and employee performance in the Nigerian construction industry. Job enrichment was identified as the most effective motivational approach, reflecting the value workers place on professional development, autonomy, and skill utilization. At the same time, the strong performance of financial incentives, such as pay structures and reward systems, highlights the economic realities facing Nigerian construction workers, for whom competitive compensation remains essential in addressing security and advancement needs. This is synonymous with the findings of Afuye (2016) on the relationship between workers' performance and motivation strategies in organizations. A significant gap was observed between the effectiveness and implementation of motivational strategies, particularly in job enrichment, suggesting that construction firms are not fully leveraging available approaches. This gap may reflect limited management knowledge, resource constraints, or organizational resistance to change. Addressing this challenge presents an opportunity for industry improvement.

Conclusion

This study has shown that motivational strategies exert a significant influence on employee performance within the Nigerian construction industry. Among the various approaches considered, job enrichment was identified as the most effective, followed by competitive compensation and structured reward programs. While financial incentives remain valuable, the prominence of job enrichment highlights a growing preference among Nigerian construction workers for professional development and greater autonomy in their roles.

The study also revealed a gap between the effectiveness of certain motivational strategies and their actual implementation in practice. This gap presents a critical opportunity for improvement within the industry.

The study recommended that construction firms specifically in Nigeria should adopt comprehensive motivational strategies that integrate financial rewards with job design enhancements and employee empowerment initiatives. Such an approach will not only boost individual performance but also contribute to better project delivery and improved competitiveness in the increasingly demanding construction market. Practically, the findings suggest that firms should prioritize a balance of job enrichment and competitive financial incentives. Management development programmes are needed to enhance the deployment of motivational strategies, with emphasis on job design, recognition, and employee engagement. While the study is limited by its Abuja focus, cross-sectional design, and reliance on self-reported data, future research should adopt

longitudinal and comparative approaches across regions to deepen understanding of contextual influences on motivation and performance.

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