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## Rewards and Counseling as Tools for Sustaining the Productivity of Academic Staff in Selected Nigerian Universities

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### **Abstract**

*This study was designed to determine the extent to which rewards and counseling were used to manage the performance and sustain the productivity of academic staff in the Nigerian public university system. Survey design was adopted. Academic staff of three Nigerian universities constituted the population for the study from which a sample of 240 was drawn. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. A four-point likert type questionnaire was used in gathering data which was analyzed with simple percentages and*

*hypothesis tested with chi-square statistic at 0.05 significance level. Analysis revealed that, Nigerian universities do not adequately reward their academic staff. Furthermore it was discovered that academic staff, especially the poorly appraised, are not exposed to counseling services. It was recommended amongst others, that government agencies involved in educational policy making should ensure the establishment of counseling units in universities to specifically assist the poor performers.*

Employee performances evaluation is an integral part of the reward and punishment system of most organizations, including Nigerian Universities. Employees who receive favourable evaluations tend to receive organizational rewards. Rewards are the direct and indirect material and psychological compensations or pay off for rendering a service or for high productivity. Rewards are said to be extrinsic when they are external to the work itself and granted to employees by other people such as; money (wages), merit pay, fringe benefits, promotion, status symbols and praise. In the same vein, rewards are said to be intrinsic when they are directly related to performing the job. They are self granted and internally experienced. They include; a sense of accomplishment, self-esteem, autonomy, personal growth and self-actualization (Inyang 2004). In other words, rewards contextually transcends just mere promotion and corresponding salary increase, with little or nothing unusual added to such an employee, as is the case in most of our private and public organizations including Nigerian public universities (Inyang, 2004).

Rewards (intrinsic & extrinsic), are used as compensations to employees for who received performance evaluation to further boost their performances and productivities. According to Nwachukwu (1992), the reward systems operational in both public and private organizations in Nigeria, does not show any correlation between efforts expended by an employee and what the organization offers as reward to the employee even after a superlative performance appraisal outcome. Naturally, when an employee experiences such inequity, he may decide to restore equity by reducing performance. Poor reward system has an effect on employee turnover, truancy, lack of commitment and low productivity. Whereas a good reward system leads to motivation and makes employees willing to place their knowledge and skills productively at the disposal of others and the organization or university at large.

On the other hand, employees who receive unfavourable or negative performance appraisal feedback receive organizational sanctions and punitive measures such as; demotion, termination of appointment, non-promotion and other disciplinary measures. This often leads to feelings of disenchantment, discouragement and demonization. These factors are capable of causing the work performance and productivity of such employees to further decline. However, Fisher (2004) opined that a low performance could be transformed to a high performance through a systematic and

well articulated counseling programme. It is regrettably observed however that most organizations in Nigeria (including universities) do not expose their employees, especially the poorly appraised employees to counseling services, hence their performance and productivity keeps declining in some cases from bad to worse. (Inyang, 2004).

Arburkle (1967), as cited by Asququo (2009:28), defined counseling as “assisting individual towards responsibility, independence and development of maximum potential or self –actualization”. Ipaye (1993:41), defined counseling as “creating opportunities and suitable environment for personal, social, educational and vocational growth of individuals”.

The common theme that runs through these definitions of counseling involves creating the enabling environment that makes the individual become confident enough to choose a particular course of action and see it through. This is achieved not only through cultivating greater self-understanding of inherent potentials, but also by communicating appropriate options for the next phase in the person’s life (Asuquo, 2009).

While an employee who is rated highly during performance appraisals receives organizational rewards and compensation capable of further boosting performance and sustaining their productivity, it is observed that the performance and productivity of the employees who rate poorly during appraisals further declines due to the fact that they receive organizational sanctions and punishment leading to feelings of disenchantment, discouragement and de-motivation. However, for such a poorly rated and unproductive staff to improve, the university or organization should organize systematic and articulate counseling programmes capable of bringing such a staff to normalcy, optimal productivity and functionality. In other word, the employee is assisted or helped to recognize his potentials and achieve a feeling of self-worth, as well as assumes responsibility as a fully functional entity, capable of effective communication, searching and utilizing information, making decisions, more self confident and flexible, effectively responding to and interacting with the environment (Willaims 1973).

This study is designed to determine the extend to which rewards and counseling are used to manage the performance and sustain the productivity of both highly and poorly rated or appraised academic staff of (selected) Nigerian public universities. In other words, this study seeks to investigate the rewards and punishment systems of Nigerian public universities.

### **Problem of the Study**

The job performance of academic staff is regularly measured to determine their specific contributions in terms of research, community service/development, university administration, as well as university teaching experience in general. On one hand, some who receive positive or high appraisals receive compensation such as fringe benefits, merit pays and other specific welfare and motivational packages capable of further

boosting the productivity of such highly rated academic staff on the other hand, those who receive negative or poor appraisals receive sanctions and punishment, such as, non-promotion and sometimes outright termination of appointments, without taking into cognizance the factors that may have led to the low performance and productivity of such academic staff. This leaves such staff or employees' discouraged, disenchanted and de-motivated leading to a further decline in productivity.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is therefore to determine the extent to which rewards and counseling are used to manage the performance and sustain the productivity of academic staff and also to determine the effectiveness of the rewards and punishment systems currently operational in Nigerian public universities.

### **Research Question**

The following null research questions were formulated for the study;

1. Is there any significant relationship between academic staff reward systems and sustainable productivity?
2. Is there any significant relationship between academic staff counseling and sustainable productivity?

### **Research Hypothesis**

The following research hypotheses were formulated for the study;

**HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between academic staff rewards system and sustainable productivity.

**HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between academic staff counseling and sustainable productivity.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The research design for this study was survey design

#### **Population/Sample of the Study**

The population used in this study consist of all academic staff in the three universities used in the study. They are as follows;

University of Calabar, 5,500, University of Uyo, 4,500 and Cross River University of Technology, Calabar 2,000, academic staff, totaling 12,000. The stratified random sampling technique was used to draw a sample of 240. (120 drawn from UNICAL, 80 from UNIUYO and 40 from CRUTECH). The 240 respondents consisted of professors, readers, senior lecturers, lecturers I & II, Assistant lecturers and graduate assistants.

**Instrumentation**

A four-point likert type questionnaire was used in gathering relevant information from respondents. Section A of the questionnaire sought information relating to respondents demographic data while section B contains items that are to determine the extent of the uses of rewards and counseling. The instrument was validated based on relevant review and advice from experts and colleagues.

**Data Collection**

The researchers went to each of the three universities selected and administered the questionnaires to the 240 respondents. At the end 142 were returned, representing 60% while 98 were not returned representing 40%.

**Data Analysis**

Simple percentage was used to analyze, the data/answer the research questions. The chi-square test was used to test the hypothesis.

**Questionnaire Analysis**

**Table 1:**

**Rewards Received are Commensurate with Good Performance and Therefore Capable of Motivating and Sustaining Productivity**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly agreed	15	10.6
Agreed	25	17.6
Strongly disagreed	53	37.3
Disagreed	49	34.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100</b>

Responses to the question of whether the rewards received by positively appraised academic staff are commensurate with performance, table 1 above revealed that 10.6% strongly agreed and 17.6% agreed that the rewards are not commensurate with their performance, whereas 37.3% strongly disagreed and 34.5% disagreed.

**Table 2**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly agreed	16	11.3
Agreed	26	18.3
Strongly disagreed	49	34.5
Disagreed	51	35.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100</b>

Responses to the question of whether poorly appraised staff are exposed to counseling, Table 2 above indicates that 11.3% and 18.3% of respondent strongly agreed and agreed respectively, while 34.5% and 35.9% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that poorly rated academic employees are exposed to counseling to improve their productivity.

**Table 3**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly agreed	17	12.0
Agreed	28	19.7
Strongly disagreed	50	35.2
Disagreed	47	33.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100</b>

Responses to the question of poorly rated academic not requiring counseling but rather punishment to help sustain productivity. Table 3 above reveals that 12.0% and 19.7% strongly agreed and agreed respectively, while 35.2% and 33.1% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that counseling is not necessary but rather punishment is required in sustaining their productivity.

**Table 4**

<b>Options</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Strongly agreed	15	10.3
Agreed	25	17.6
Strongly disagreed	52	36.6
Disagreed	50	35.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>100</b>

Responses to the issues of whether the general rewards and punishment systems are capable of sustaining productivity as contained in. Table 4 above, shows that 10.6% and 17.6% strongly agreed and agreed respectively, whereas 36.6% and 35.2% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively, that then general rewards and punishment systems is capable of sustaining productivity of employees

**Decision Rule**

If the calculated  $\chi^2$  value is less than the table value of  $\chi^2$ , accept the null and if however the  $\chi^2$  is higher than the  $\chi^2$  table value, reject the null hypothesis.

**Test of Hypothesis**

Applying the chi-square test at 0.05 level of significance, with decision rule that if the calculated  $\chi^2$  value is less than the  $\chi^2$  from the table do not reject hypothesis null.

**Table 5 Computation of X<sup>2</sup> the Null Response on the Hypothesis that there is no Significant Relationship between Academic Staff Rewards System and Sustainable Productivity.**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>O-E</b>	<b>(O-E)<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>(O-E)<sup>2</sup>/E</b>
PROFESSOR	Strongly Agreed	1	1.06	-1.06	0.01	0.01
	Agreed	1	1.76	-0.76	0.58	0.54
	Strongly Disagreed	6	3.73	2.27	5.15	1.38
	Disagreed	2	3.45	-1.45	2.10	0.60
Associate Professor & Senior lecturer	Strongly Agreed	1	3.27	-2.27	5.15	1.58
	Agreed	5	5.45	-4.46	0.21	0.04
	Strongly Disagreed	16	11.57	4.43	19.62	1.70
	Disagreed	9	10.70	-17	2.89	0.27
Lecturer I & II	Strongly Agreed	12	9.40	2.6	6.76	0.72
	Agreed	19	15.67	3.33	11.09	0.70
	Strongly Disagreed	25	23.21	-821	67.40	2.03
	Disagreed	33	30.71	2.29	5.24	0.17
Assistant Lecturer & Graduate Assistant	Strongly Agreed	1	1.26	-0.26	0.07	0.05
	Agreed	1	2.11	-1.11	1.23	0.58
	Strongly Disagreed	6	4.48	1.52	2.31	0.51
	Disagreed	4	4.14	0.14	0.02	0.01
<b>Total</b>		142				10.89

The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between academic staff reward systems and sustainable productivity was not rejected because in accordance with the decision rule the computed x<sup>2</sup> is 10.89 is less than the table value of 14.68.

**Table 6: Computation of Responses on the Null Hypothesis that there is No Significant Relationship Between Academic Staff Counseling and Sustainable Productivity.**

<b>Designation</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>O-E</b>	<b>(O-E)<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>(O-E)<sup>2</sup>/E</b>
Professor	Strongly Agreed	1	3.13	-0.13	0.02	0.01
	Agreed	1	1.88	-0.83	0.69	0.38
	Strongly Disagreed	5	3.45	1.55	2.40	0.07
Associate Professor & Senior lecturer	Disagreed	3	3.59	-0.59	0.35	0.10
	Strongly Agreed	1	3.49	-2.49	6.20	1.78
	Agreed	5	5.68	-0.68	0.46	0.08
	Strongly Disagreed	15	10.70	4.3	18.49	1.73
	Disagreed	10	11.13	-1.13	1.28	0.11
Lecturer I & II	Strongly Agreed	12	10.05	1.95	3.80	0.38
	Agreed	19	16.30	2.7	7.29	0.44
	Strongly Disagreed	24	30.71	-6.71	45.02	1.47
	Disagreed	34	31.96	2.04	4.16	0.13
Assistant Lecturer & Graduate Assistant	Strongly Agreed	2	1.35	0.65	0.42	0.31
	Agreed	1	2.20	-1.2	1.44	0.65
	Strongly Disagreed	5	4.14	0.86	0.73	0.18
	Disagreed	4	4.31	-0.31	0.10	0.02
<b>Total</b>		142				8.470



The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between academic staff counseling and sustainable productivity was accepted. This is because as shown in table 6 above the computed  $X^2$  is 8.48 which is less than table value of 14.68.

### **Discussion of Findings**

Based on the result of data analyzed, it has been revealed that the rewards offered academic staff in Nigerian universities were not commensurate with their performance, especially those who perform highly during appraisals, hence this rewards are unable to motivate and sustain productivity. This aptly agrees with the studies of Inyang (1998) who discovered that poor rewards systems leads to costly turnover and that the Nigerian universities and industrial landscape is replete with cases of organizations and managers paying starvation wages to employees, offering no opportunity for growth, providing dreary and demoralizing working environment.

Analysis of data also established that academic staff, especially the poorly rated ones, are not given the opportunity of counseling services, but rather visited with various doses of punitive measures which may not sustain productivity.

This study has established that academic staffs in Nigerian universities are not rewarded properly in a manner that should sustain productivity even when they perform highly. The unavailability of counseling services especially for poorly rated academic staffs' was also strongly established. The issue of counseling services not provided by our universities for staff also agrees with the work of Asuquo (2008) who observed that counseling which should help to correct behavioural and attitudinal inadequacies in work environment was relegated to the back ground by most public and private organizations in Nigeria.

### **Recommendations/Implications for Counseling and Reward Systems**

The findings of this study and issues raised have implications for counseling and reward systems.

The study brought to the front burner the absence of counseling services in Nigerian public universities. This is therefore an opportunity to beckon on the National Universities Commission (UNC), the federal ministry of education and other stake holders in university education policy making, to ensure the establishment of a professionalized counseling scheme or unit for academic staff in all universities to sustain productivity. The counseling unit should organize workshops and seminars on regular and sustainable basis to encourage and help employees, especially the poorly rated to accept themselves and appreciate their environmental and career needs which would assist them to strive towards attaining personal career and organizational goals.

University administration should ensure an improvement in the quality of compensations and rewards offered academic staff if productivity is to be sustained. Hard work and high performance should be appropriately rewarded if productivity is to

be sustained. A situation however where, (as revealed by our study) an academic staff performs highly and what comes as reward is not commensurate and motivating and yet authorities expecting further high grade performance from the same employee, by the university is rather unfortunate. Necessary government agencies in charge of wage/salary administration should create means of offering extrinsic rewards capable of creating intrinsic effects, motivating and sustaining productivity of academic staff in the public university system. Fringe benefits, merit pays, bonuses and so on, outside normal promotion and the little salary increases, should be employed to sustain the productivity of academic staff. Further more compensations such as; wage supplements based on the number of dependents, transport allowances based on area of residence and housing subsidy based on type of accommodation offered can go a long way to sustain the productivity of academic staff.

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