



Reward System and Professional Development as Motivational Tools for Improving Teachers' Job Performance in Senior Secondary Schools of Sokoto State

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the role of reward system, professional development in improving teachers' job performance in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 3,331 teachers from 164 senior secondary schools across six educational zones in the state. Using stratified and proportionate sampling techniques, a sample of 321 teachers was selected. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire based on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument was validated by experts, while its reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha with a coefficient of 0.80. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation. The findings revealed that reward systems positively influenced teachers' job performance by enhancing commitment, punctuality, and effectiveness in instructional delivery. Professional development programmes such as workshops, seminars, and in-service training significantly enhanced teachers' skills, competence, and classroom management. The study recommended that, School administrators should establish an open, checklist-based reward system where the criteria for recognition (such as punctuality, lesson preparation, or teaching effectiveness) are clearly written and shared with all staff to eliminate favoritism and ensure fairness. Schools should introduce a peer to peer "step down" training model, where any teacher who attends an external seminar or workshop is given a scheduled time to train and share those new teaching skills with fellow colleagues during staff meetings.

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INTRODUCTION

A teacher is someone who imparts knowledge, skills, and values to students, typically in settings such as schools or colleges. According to Deci (2021), teachers facilitate learning by presenting information, guiding students through activities, assessing their progress, and providing feedback. They also play a crucial role in shaping students' understanding and development. Teachers are the ones who translate educational

philosophy and objectives into knowledge and skills, transferring them to students in the classroom (Zweiris, Tigelaar & Janssen, 2023). It is generally agreed that no education system can rise above the level of its teachers, as their ability and effectiveness in fulfilling their professional duties can be influenced by various factors, including motivation (FGN, 2012).

Motivation plays a vital role in teachers' job performance, directly influencing their

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effectiveness in the classroom. Motivated teachers are more likely to engage actively with their students, whereas low motivation can lead to disengagement, reduced effectiveness, and negatively impact student outcomes (Wang, Chen & Zheng, 2024). Teacher motivation boosts morale and performance, supporting the achievement of educational goals within an organization. Motivation and performance are key elements of school success and student achievement. It is widely recognized that teachers' behavior can be influenced by motivation through reward system and professional development and in schools where teachers lack proper motivation, they may become less competent, which directly affects students and the education system (John, 2020).

Gouldner (2023) defines a reward as something given in return for positive actions, efforts, or achievements. It serves as a form of recognition and appreciation for good behavior or successful performance. Rewards can be tangible, such as money, gifts, or certificates, or intangible, such as praise, respect, or a sense of satisfaction. The primary purpose of a reward is to encourage continued good performance and motivate others to do the same. In schools, teachers may be rewarded with promotions, bonuses, or public recognition for their dedication and hard work.

Professional development is a continuous process of education and training aimed at enhancing an individual's competencies, knowledge, and expertise. It is crucial for professionals to acquire new skills, stay current with current trends, and progress in their careers (Bhaskar, Joshi, & Chopra, 2021). It is also often includes structured educational programs or training sessions, it also encompasses informal learning opportunities that align with the professional's work and career goals. In many fields, especially in education is a voluntary pursuit, with many educators actively seeking such opportunities to maintain and expand their skills even when not mandated (Smith & Gillespie, 2023).

These opportunities include attending seminars, workshops, conferences, and

networking events. Educators, for instance, participate in these activities to refine their teaching practices, adopt innovative strategies, and ensure they are equipped to meet the evolving needs of their students. Engagement in professional development also plays a significant role in career progression by enhancing their expertise, educators can improve the quality of their work, increase job satisfaction Hayes (2024).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teacher motivation is a critical driver of educational success and organizational development. While highly motivated teachers foster exceptional student outcomes, demotivated educators often suffering from low pay, overcrowded classrooms, lack of support, and toxic management threats frequently underperform. The problem involved inadequate reward systems, Furthermore, while professional development is vital, systemic issues like budget constraints, logistical challenges, and poor organization cause teachers to view these programs as low-quality and irrelevant. Ultimately, poor motivation leads to inadequate lesson preparation, student failure, and teacher misconduct. This study highlights the urgent need to investigate how these core motivational strategies rewards system and professional development, are implemented in Sokoto State secondary schools, and explores actionable ways to improve teacher job performance.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the role of reward system and professional development in improvement of teacher's job performance in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State: however, the following are the specific objectives of the study.

1. To find out the extent to which the use of reward system improves in teachers' jobs performance in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State
2. To find out the extent to which teachers professional development helps in improvement of teacher's job performance



Research Questions

This study raises the following as its research question.

1. What is the extent to which the use of reward system improves in teachers' jobs performance in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State?
2. What is the extent to which teachers' professional development helps in improvement of teacher's job performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Motivation is frequently described as an internal process that initiates, guides, and sustains goal-directed behavior. According to Ryan and Deci (2020), motivation involves the interplay between intrinsic factors, such as interest and personal satisfaction, and extrinsic influences, such as rewards or external recognition. This duality highlights the complexity of motivation, which can stem from both a genuine internal desire to accomplish a task and external rewards that validate the effort. Motivation is defined as the activation of the brain's reward systems to initiate and maintain goal-directed behaviors. Teachers' job performance in this context is influenced by factors such as professional competence, workload, and the availability of teaching resources. Ofoegbu(2021) highlights that well-trained and motivated teachers are more likely to perform effectively, resulting in improved student learning experiences.

Dopamine, a neurotransmitter, plays a significant role in modulating motivational states. Robbins and Everitt (2022) describe motivation as the brain's mechanism to evaluate rewards and risks, which in turn influences decision-making processes. Obiwezuozor (2020) conducted an empirical study in Anambra State, Nigeria, to explore the impact of intrinsic motivators, such as passion for teaching, on teacher performance. The study aimed to understand how teachers' internal motivations, such as their love for teaching and personal fulfillment from student success, influence their job performance and effectiveness in the classroom.

Teachers' job performance is often defined as the extent to which teachers achieve educational objectives through effective teaching, student engagement, and classroom management. According to Ofoegbu (2021), it encompasses not only the delivery of subject matter but also the ability to inspire, motivate, and support students in achieving their academic and personal growth. Professional competence, which includes subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and the ability to address diverse student needs, is another cornerstone of high job performance (Darling-Hammond, 2021). Ololube (2023) describes it as the ability of teachers to effectively balance their instructional duties with other professional expectations, such as participating in school decision-making processes, fostering positive relationships with parents, and contributing to the professional learning community. Ogunyemi, Adeoye and Alabi(2022) conducted an empirical study in Oyo State, Nigeria, to examine the impact of promotion opportunities on teacher productivity in secondary schools.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive survey design to examine the role of motivation in improvement of teacher's job performance in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State by using reward system, professional development. The target population of the study consist of 164 schools and 3,331 teachers from six educational zones in Sokoto State. A Stratified and proportionate sampling techniques were used for this study, 321 teachers were sampled across six educational zones in Sokoto state. However, 148 schools were sampled proportionately. A questionnaire instrument was used by the researcher consisting of 4-point Likert rating scale.

The instrument is named Motivation Role of Teacher Job Performance Questionnaire Scale tagged as MRTJPQ. The instrument was adapted from Obunadike (2013), titled: Teacher Motivation Assessment Scale (TMAS) for Quality Assurance. In this study the questionnaire which was adapted from Obunadike (2013), titled: Teacher Motivation Assessment Scale (TMAS) for



Quality Assurance was Initially 50 items, 22 items have now been removed in order for it to cover the content and scope of the Variables. The responses were collected, tabulated, computed and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation, were used to summarize the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents and to describe their responses to items relating to reward systems, professional development, The results obtained from the analysis were presented in tables and interpreted in line with the study questions and existing literature.

RESULTS

This section presents an in-depth analysis of the responses obtained from the administered questionnaires, utilizing descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation (SD). Data are systematically organized in tables to enhance clarity and facilitate comprehension. The mean score is used to determine the average response of respondents on each research item, while the standard deviation measures the degree

of variation or dispersion of responses from the mean. The mean score was also used to determine the extent of respondents' responses to each research item classifying them as either low or high extent.

Based on four-point Likert scale criterion used, any item with a mean score of 2.50 and above is considered accepted/agreed, indicating that respondents generally support the statement. Conversely, any item with a mean score below 2.50 is considered rejected/disagreed, indicating that respondents do not support the statement. The standard deviation values are further used to assess the extent of variation in respondents' opinions, where a lower standard deviation indicates closer agreement among respondents, while a higher standard deviation suggests greater divergence in responses. And also any item with a mean score below 3.00 was considered as low extent while any mean score of 3.00 and above was considered as high extent.

RQ1: What is the extent to which the use of reward system improves in teachers' jobs performance in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State?

Table 1. The Extent to which Reward System Improves Teachers' Job Performance

S/No	REWARD SYSTEM	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
1.	The reward system in my school motivates me to perform better.	88	101	122	10	2.83	0.87	LE
2.	Recognition of teaching efforts through rewards is important	189	81	30	20	3.31	0.94	HE
3.	The reward system is fairly applied to all teachers.	67	92	140	22	2.64	0.94	LE
4.	I feel more motivated after receiving rewards for my teaching.	196	36	83	6	3.33	0.84	HE
5.	The reward system helps foster a positive teaching environment.	296	25	0	0	3.92	0.28	HE
6.	The reward system should be based on student feedback.	93	193	35	0	3.18	0.64	HE
7.	Rewards contribute to my professional development as a teacher.	120	102	8	91	2.68	1.19	LE
Total						21.89	5.7	

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

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Table 4.2 presents a detailed analysis of respondents' perceptions regarding the extent to which the reward system contributes to the improvement of teachers' job performance in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State. The analysis is based on the mean scores and standard deviations derived from the responses, reflecting both the central tendency and the degree of variation among respondents.

The findings reveal that the statement *"the reward system in my school motivates me to perform better"* recorded a mean score of 2.83 with a standard deviation of 0.87, indicating a low extent of agreement among respondents. This suggests that while the reward system is perceived as a motivating factor, its impact may not be strongly felt by all teachers. This low extent perception could be linked to variations in how rewards are implemented or experienced across the schools.

Building on this, the statement *"Recognition of teaching efforts through rewards is important"* recorded a higher mean score of 3.31 and a standard deviation of 0.94, indicating a high extent of agreement among respondents. This demonstrates that teachers place significant value on recognition and acknowledgment of their efforts, suggesting that reward systems that emphasize recognition are more likely to enhance motivation and, consequently, job performance. However, the perception of fairness in the implementation of the reward system appears less positive, as indicated by the statement *"the reward system is fairly applied to all teachers"* which recorded a mean score of 2.64 and a standard deviation of 0.94. This relatively lower mean suggests a low extent of agreement among respondents regarding the fairness of reward distribution. This perception of unfairness may weaken the overall effectiveness of the reward system, as motivation is often closely tied to transparency and equity in organizational practices.

In contrast, the statement *"I feel more motivated after receiving rewards for my teaching"* yielded a mean score of 3.33 with a standard deviation of 0.84, indicating a high extent of agreement. This reinforces the direct positive

relationship between rewards and teacher motivation, suggesting that when rewards are actually received, they have a strong and immediate impact on enhancing teachers' willingness to perform better.

Furthermore, the item *"the reward system helps foster a positive teaching environment"* recorded the highest mean score of 3.92 with a very low standard deviation of 0.28, indicating a high extent of agreement and a very strong consensus among respondents. This implies that an effective reward system not only motivates individual teachers but also contributes significantly to creating a supportive and positive work environment, which is essential for sustained job performance and overall school effectiveness. Similarly, the statement *"the reward system should be based on student feedback"* recorded a mean score of 3.18 and a standard deviation of 0.64, indicating a high extent of agreement among respondents. This suggests that teachers are open to incorporating student feedback into the reward system, possibly as a means of improving fairness, accountability, and relevance in the evaluation of teaching performance.

On the other hand, the statement *"Rewards contribute to my professional development as a teacher"* recorded a comparatively lower mean score of 2.68 with a higher standard deviation of 1.19, indicating a low extent of agreement with noticeable variation in responses. This suggests that while some teachers perceive rewards as contributing to their professional growth, others do not see a strong link between rewards and long-term development. The higher variability in responses may reflect differences in the types of rewards provided or the extent to which they are aligned with professional development opportunities.

The aggregate mean score of 21.89 with a standard deviation of 5.7 indicates that the reward system plays a meaningful role in enhancing teachers' job performance, albeit with some limitations. The results collectively suggest that while rewards are effective in motivating teachers, recognizing their efforts, and fostering a positive work environment, concerns regarding fairness and the alignment of rewards with



professional development need to be addressed. Strengthening these aspects of the reward system could further enhance its effectiveness as a tool for improving teachers' job performance in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State

RQ2: What extent does teacher professional development helps in improvement of teacher's job performance?

Table 2. the Extent to which Professional Development Improves Teachers' Job Performance

S/no	Professional development	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std. Deviation	Description
	Professional development programs like conferences, workshops seminars etc motivate me to improve my teaching.	190	56	75	0	3.36	0.84	HE
	I feel more confident in my teaching after attending professional development activities.	234	87	0	0	3.73	0.45	HE
	I am more motivated when I apply what I learn from professional development programs.	170	150	0	1	3.52	0.52	HE
	Professional development helps me stay updated on new teaching methods.	228	93	0	0	3.71	0.45	HE
	The school administration supports my professional development needs.	128	102	66	25	3.04	0.96	HE
	I feel recognized when my professional development achievements are acknowledged.	116	191	13	1	3.31	0.56	HE
	Continuous professional development is crucial for maintaining teacher motivation.	92	195	34	0	3.18	0.60	HE
	Total					3.41	0.62	

Source: Fieldwork, 2025

Table 4.4 presents the analysis of respondents' perceptions regarding the extent to which professional development contributes to the improvement of teachers' job performance in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State. The analysis is based on mean scores and standard deviations, reflecting both the level of agreement and the degree of consistency among respondents.

The results indicate that the statement "Professional development programs like conferences, workshops, seminars, etc., motivate

me to improve my teaching" recorded a mean score of 3.36 with a standard deviation of 0.84, indicating a high extent of agreement among respondents. This suggests that participation in professional development activities serves as a strong motivational factor that enhances teachers' commitment to improving their instructional practices.

In a similar vein, the statement "I feel more confident in my teaching after attending professional development activities" recorded a notably high mean score of 3.73 with a relatively low standard deviation of 0.45. This reflects a high

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extent of agreement and a high level of consistency among respondents, implying that professional development significantly boosts teachers' confidence, which is essential for effective classroom performance.

Closely related to this, the item *"I am more motivated when I apply what I learn from professional development programs"* yielded a mean score of 3.52 and a standard deviation of 0.52, indicating a high extent of agreement. This suggests that the practical application of knowledge and skills acquired from professional development programs plays a critical role in enhancing teachers' motivation and, by extension, their job performance.

Furthermore, the statement *"Professional development helps me stay updated on new teaching methods"* recorded a mean score of 3.71 with a standard deviation of 0.45, indicating a high extent of agreement among respondents. This underscores the importance of continuous learning in enabling teachers to adapt to evolving pedagogical approaches, thereby improving the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. The perception of institutional support is reflected in the statement *"The school administration supports my professional development needs"*, which recorded a mean score of 3.04 with a standard deviation of 0.96. This indicates a high extent of agreement among respondents. However, the comparatively lower mean and higher variability suggest that such support may not be consistently experienced across all schools. This inconsistency could limit the overall effectiveness of professional development initiatives.

Additionally, the statement *"I feel recognized when my professional development achievements are acknowledged"* recorded a mean score of 3.31 with a standard deviation of 0.56, indicating a high extent of agreement among respondents. This suggests that recognition of professional development efforts contributes positively to teachers' motivation, reinforcing the importance of acknowledgment in sustaining professional growth. Similarly, the item *"Continuous professional development is crucial for maintaining teacher motivation"* yielded a

mean score of 3.18 and a standard deviation of 0.60, indicating a high extent of agreement among respondents. This highlights the perceived importance of ongoing professional learning as a key factor in sustaining motivation and enhancing long-term job performance.

The aggregate mean score of 3.41 with a standard deviation of 0.62 indicates that professional development has a strong positive influence on teachers' job performance. The findings collectively suggest that professional development enhances teachers' confidence, motivation, and ability to adopt innovative teaching methods. However, the relatively lower perception of administrative support compared to other items points to the need for more structured and consistent institutional backing to maximize the benefits of professional development programs. Strengthening support systems and ensuring equitable access to development opportunities would further enhance teachers' performance in senior secondary schools in Sokoto State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study presents a detailed discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions. The discussion is anchored on empirical evidence derived from the analysed data as presented in Tables 1 and 2. The findings from Table 1 on reward systems revealed that teachers generally agreed that reward systems positively influence their job performance, as indicated by relatively high mean scores across most items. Specifically, the table revealed that recognition, incentives, and appreciation from school management significantly enhance teachers' motivation and commitment. This suggests that both intrinsic rewards (such as recognition and respect) and extrinsic rewards (such as financial incentives) are important drivers of teacher performance.

Beyond this, the findings indicate that recognition serves as a psychological reinforcement mechanism, fostering a sense of value and belonging among teachers, which in turn enhances their willingness to perform beyond minimum expectations. However, the table also revealed comparatively lower mean values



regarding fairness and equity in reward distribution, indicating that not all teachers perceive the system as transparent or just. This disparity is particularly important, as perceived inequity can lead to dissatisfaction, reduced morale, and even withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism or reduced effort. It implies that while reward systems exist, their effectiveness is constrained by issues of inconsistency and perceived bias. This finding supports Adeyemi and Oladipo (2022) and Akpan and Archibong (2018), who found that rewards enhance teacher performance.

It also aligns with equity theory, which posits that employees continuously compare their inputs and outcomes with others, and any perceived imbalance can negatively affect motivation. Furthermore, this finding resonates with broader studies in Sub-Saharan Africa, where weak institutional accountability often undermines the effectiveness of incentive systems. Therefore, the implication of this finding is that reward systems must not only be available but must also be institutionalized in a transparent, consistent, and merit-based manner to sustain teacher motivation and performance over time.

In addition, the findings from table 2 on professional development revealed that professional development has a very strong and significant influence on teachers' job performance. The table indicated very high mean scores across items related to training, workshops, skill acquisition, and confidence building, suggesting that teachers highly value opportunities for continuous learning. This implies that professional development plays a transformative role in enhancing not only teachers' technical skills but also their confidence, creativity, and adaptability in the classroom. Furthermore, the findings indicate that exposure to new teaching methodologies, technologies, and pedagogical approaches enables teachers to respond more effectively to diverse student needs and evolving educational demands.

However, the table also revealed relatively moderate responses regarding institutional support for professional development, indicating that access to such opportunities may

be uneven. This suggests that while teachers are willing to improve themselves, systemic barriers such as funding limitations, inadequate planning, and lack of institutional commitment may restrict their participation. This finding strongly supports Hargreaves and Fullan (2023), Ladd (2020), and Mosha (2018), who emphasized that continuous professional development, is essential for sustaining teacher effectiveness and improving student outcomes. It also aligns with Human Capital Theory, which underscores that investment in skills and knowledge yields significant returns in terms of productivity and performance. Additionally, the findings suggest that linking professional development to career progression and recognition may further enhance its impact. Therefore, the implication is that educational authorities must move beyond ad hoc training initiatives and develop structured, well-funded, and inclusive professional development frameworks.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that reward systems and professional development are fundamental pillars for improving teacher job performance in Sokoto State's senior secondary schools. The findings demonstrate that rewards including recognition, incentives, and appreciation significantly boost teacher motivation, commitment, and instructional effectiveness. However, the current lack of transparency and perceived bias in distributing these rewards undermines their potential impact.

Furthermore, professional development acts as a transformative force, directly improving teachers' classroom confidence and their ability to apply modern teaching methods. Despite its importance, access remains inconsistent due to limited institutional support and systemic barriers. Ultimately, to achieve sustained educational excellence in Sokoto State, authorities must move beyond informal practices. It is essential to institutionalize a fair, merit-based reward framework and establish structured, well-funded training programs that empower educators to meet evolving academic standards



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings above the following recommendations were made:

1. School administrators should establish an open, checklist-based reward system where the criteria for recognition (such as punctuality, lesson preparation, or teaching effectiveness) are clearly written and shared with all staff to eliminate favoritism and ensure fairness.
2. Schools should introduce a peer to peer "step down" training model, where any teacher who attends an external seminar or workshop is given a scheduled time to train and share those new teaching skills with fellow colleagues during staff meetings.

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