

## CAREER ADVANCEMENT AND REWARD SYSTEM: QUANTUM FACTORS FOR EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Even in today's fiercely competitive economic world, many institutions aspire to succeed and make continuous advancements, regardless of their size or technological capabilities. Motivational techniques must be created and properly applied, making use of all available resources, in order to accomplish those aims and objectives. Thus, this study aimed at investigating the effect of employee motivation on organizational performance of selected Federal Universities in North Central, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to: (i) investigate the effect of employee career advancement on commitment to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria (ii) determine the effect of reward system on quality of work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. The study adopted cross sectional survey design. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Six (6) Federal Universities were selected across the North-Central, Nigeria. A sample of 374 academic staff of the selected Universities were selected from a population of 13,708 using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula. Simple random sampling technique was used for the study. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis at 0.05% significant level. The findings of the study were that: Employee career advancement has a significant effect on commitment to work: (Employee training and development)  $\beta = 0.181$ ,  $t = 2.913$ ,  $p = 0.004$ , and (Employee mentorship programme)  $\beta = 0.318$ ,  $t = 5.529$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ; Reward system has a significant effect on quality of work; (Extrinsic rewards)  $\beta = 0.289$ ,  $t = 4.941$ ,  $p = 0.000$ , and (Intrinsic rewards)  $\beta = 0.351$ ,  $t = 5.757$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . The study concluded that employee motivation can immensely improve job satisfaction, attitude to work, commitment to work and quality of work among the academic staff of the selected Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. The study therefore, recommended that*

*universities should provide adequate career advisory services to its academic staff as well as have adequate and proper career development plan for its academic staff to improve on their overall performance and develop more effective reward system.*

**Keywords:** Career advancement, reward system, employee commitment, quality work, employee training

## INTRODUCTION

In order for a company to grow, growth planning and career development are essential. In addition to the need for a good salary, earnings, and other benefits, a new employee of the company surely wants something else that will help him or her advance professionally. This is essentially to ensure alignment between the employee's personal objectives and corporate objectives, which is to say that employee commitment would enhance employees' performance. People who typically work in organizations are expected to be provided with a continuous career development process because organizations can benefit from career development just as much as employees or other people can.

Because today's workforce is constantly intending to show a strong desire to seek objectives beyond just a job, it may not be unrelated to their ambition to look for a job that would allow them to advance their personalities, hobbies, and skill sets. The majority of workers are no longer satisfied with their job and the standard benefits due to rising living standards, so they want a job that reflects their passions, personalities, skills, and fits within their entire life circumstances. Employees' desire for management to be interested in their professional growth will increase productivity and strengthen commitment to organizational objectives. The success of the majority of Nigerian universities is mostly dependent on their employees. The employees are in charge of creating and offering services to the public and students. Academic institutions are in the service industry, thus staff performance determines how well management can compete and survive. A highly skilled and trained workforce is required for this labour-intensive business to produce the quality that would satisfy customers. This implies that the university must not only hire and train the most qualified applicants for the position, but also be able to retain its staff. No business can attain optimal performance in an environment that is quite competitive unless every employee is dedicated and committed to the organisation. On the other hand, the relationship between the academic staff's dedication, career development, and reward system has not received enough attention. Hence, this present study has been designed to fill the identified gap. It is in the light of the above this study sought to examine the effect of employee motivation on organizational performance in some selected Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

The following research questions will be formulated for the study:

- i. What is the effect of employee career advancement on commitment to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent does reward system affect quality of work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria?

The main objective of the study is to investigate the effect of employee motivation on organizational performance of selected Federal Universities in North Central, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

- i. To investigate the effect of employee career advancement on commitment to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria

- ii. To determine the effect of reward system on quality of work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria

The following hypotheses will be formulated for the study

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Employee career advancement does not have positive and significant effect on commitment to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Reward system does not have positive and significant effect on quality of work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Employee Career Advancement

Career development refers to opportunities for employees to gain new skills and advance their careers. This includes training programs, mentorships, tuition assistance. Opportunities for career development give workers new abilities and information pertinent to their positions, empowering them (Brun & Dugas, 2020). This improves engagement, performance, and morale: Employee engagement and satisfaction rise when they see that their employer values and invests in them. Surveys show 86% of employees say career development opportunities are important. With training and development programs, employees gain specialized expertise allowing them to take on more responsibilities and challenging, meaningful work. They get more involved on a daily basis as a result. Employee performance and output are improved through upskilling. Employee engagement and career development go hand in hand; cultivating talent has a direct, beneficial effect (Brun & Dugas, 2020).

### Reward System

In order to improve motivation, job satisfaction, and overall performance, organizations utilize reward systems, which are structured frameworks, to acknowledge and compensate employees for their contributions. Different definitions of reward systems have been offered by academics, who have emphasized their significance for both organizational success and employee engagement. A reward system, as defined by Armstrong and Taylor (2021), is "the combination of financial and non-financial rewards designed to attract, retain, and motivate employees in alignment with an organization's strategic objectives." This term underlines the need of integrating several compensation kinds to maximize employee performance..

Lawler (2020) goes on to explain that an effective reward system must be fair, transparent, and aligned with employee expectations to enhance job satisfaction and productivity. He claims that organizations that fail to implement equitable reward systems risk demotivating employees and reducing overall performance. Similarly, Gupta and Shaw (2021) define reward systems as "formalized mechanisms that provide employees with incentives based on their achievements, skills, and organizational contributions." Their study highlights the importance of well-structured reward systems in fostering workplace commitment and reducing turnover.

Nonetheless, other academics contend that in order to prevent unfavorable outcomes, reward systems need to be carefully planned. Deci and Ryan (2020) caution that improperly designed extrinsic rewards might erode

intrinsic drive, resulting in decreased creativity and engagement at work. They support a well-rounded strategy that incorporates both material benefits like cash incentives and immaterial benefits like recognition and chances for professional advancement. Notwithstanding these reservations, research indicates that effective incentive programs greatly improve worker engagement, motivation, and organizational effectiveness.

### **Employee Motivation**

Employee motivation is defined by Noe et al. (2021) as the psychological factors that influence the course, tenacity, and intensity of a person's voluntary work-related behavior. According to their concept, employees' willingness to perform at their best is influenced by both cognitive and emotional variables. Additionally, according to Pinder (2019), employee motivation is the collection of internal forces that propel people's conduct at work and affect their dedication and performance. This viewpoint emphasizes how motivation is dynamic and influenced by both individual characteristics and work environments.

Although these definitions emphasize various facets of employee motivation, researchers generally agree that motivation has a direct bearing on work performance, organizational success, and employee engagement. Nonetheless, some detractors contend that motivation varies depending on the organizational and cultural context and is hard to quantify objectively (Gagné & Deci, 2020). Despite this difficulty, businesses nevertheless spend money on motivational techniques because they understand how important they are for increasing employee productivity and company expansion.

### **Commitment to Work**

In its natural state, these mindsets are called Affective commitment (AC), Normative commitment (NC), and Continuance commitment (CC). Meyer (2016) defines commitment as the binding force that holds an individual to a target (social or non-social) and to a purpose that is relevant to that aim / or objective. The force can be felt in various ways and in several different mindsets, such as an affective attachment and engagement with the target, a felt responsibility to the target, and a clear knowledge of the costs associated with disengaging from such a target.

### **Employee Motivation and Quality of Work**

Employee motivation, according to Armstrong and Taylor (2021), is "the process by which employees are stimulated to act in ways that help achieve organizational goals while fulfilling their individual needs." This definition emphasizes the two facets of motivation: individual fulfillment and organizational achievement. Deci and Ryan (2020) contend that motivation can be extrinsic, impacted by outside incentives like pay and recognition, or intrinsic, driven by personal fulfillment and interest. According to empirical research, companies with robust motivational frameworks report better performance outcomes, reduced staff attrition, and increased employee engagement (Gupta & Shaw, 2021).

### **Theoretical Review**

#### **Equity Theory**

Equity Theory was introduced by John Stacey Adams in 1963 (Adams, 1963), originally, for use in the organizational setting. The theory was constructed against the lack of theoretical explanation of the psychological basis of inequity perception (Adams, 1963).

According to equity theory, people compare their efforts and rewards with those of relevant others in order to engage in social comparison. People's degree of motivation is influenced by how fairly they believe their rewards compare to those of others. When people believe that their efforts to rewards ratio is the same as that of those they compare themselves to, equity is present. When people believe that their efforts to rewards ratio is the same as that of those they compare themselves to, then there is inequity. When people believe that their efforts to rewards ratio differs from that of others they compare themselves to, usually in a negative way, then there is inequality.

There are two types of inequity – under – reward and over – reward. Under – reward occurs when a person believes that he/she is either puts in more efforts than another, yet receives the same reward, or puts in the same effort as another for a lesser rewards, for instance, if an employee works longer hours than her co-worker, yet they receive the same salary, the employee would perceive inequity in the form of under – reward. Conversely, with over – reward, a person will feel that his efforts to rewards ratio is higher than another person's, such that he is getting more for putting in the same effort, or getting the same reward even with less effort. While research suggests that under – reward motivates individuals to resolve the inequity, research also indicates that the same is not true for over – reward. Individuals who are over – rewarded often engage in cognitive dissonance, convincing themselves that their efforts and rewards are equal to another's.

### **Implication to the Study**

According to the equity theory, individuals are motivated to reduce inequity in various ways. A person may change his or her level of effort; an employee who feels under – rewarded is likely to work less hard. A person may also try to change his or her rewards, such as by asking for a raise. Another option is to change the behaviour of the reference person, perhaps by encouraging that person to put forth more effort. Finally, a person experiencing inequity may change the reference person and compare him or herself to a different person to assess equity. For managers, equity theory emphasizes the importance of a reward system that is perceived as fair by employees

### **Vroom's Expectancy Theory**

Vroom's Expectancy Theory was developed by Victor H. Vroom in 1964, is a psychological framework that explains how individuals are motivated to act in a certain way based on their expected outcomes. The theory posits that motivation is a function of three key elements: expectancy (E), instrumentality (I), and valence (V). Expectancy refers to an individual's belief that their effort will lead to improved performance, instrumentality represents the perception that performance will result in a desired reward, and valence denotes the value an individual places on the reward (Vroom, 1964).

### **Implication to the Study**

The fundamental assumption of the expectancy theory is that employees are rational decision-makers who assess the likelihood of achieving a reward before exerting effort (Lunenburg, 2011). It assumes that employees will be motivated when they believe their effort will result in good performance and that good performance will be rewarded in a manner they find desirable. This aligns with financial incentives and compensation, as employees are likely to be more engaged when they perceive that their effort leads to a tangible outcome.

### Theory Adopted for the Study

The study adopted expectancy theory. This theory is particularly relevant to employee motivation as it links effort, performance, and rewards, aligning with key variables such as recognition, compensation, financial incentives, reward systems, and job satisfaction.

### Empirical Review

Chowdhury et al. (2022) investigated the impact of employee compensation on organizational performance in Bangladesh's garment industry, covering the period between 2000 and 2022. The study employed a mixed-method research design, combining surveys and interviews to collect primary data from 250 workers in garment factories. Structural equation modeling was applied as the estimation technique. Findings showed that fair wages and timely salary payments led to increased employee morale and production efficiency. The study concluded that equitable compensation policies significantly contribute to workforce stability and long-term business sustainability. The study recommended that firms in labor-intensive industries should adopt fair wage policies and provide additional benefits such as healthcare and housing allowances to improve employee well-being and productivity.

Aminu and Lukman (2019) conducted a study on the effect of employee compensation on organizational performance in Nigeria's hospitality sector, covering the period between 2000 and 2019. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and relied on primary data collected through structured questionnaires from 150 employees in hotels and restaurants. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The study found that employee compensation significantly influenced job satisfaction, which in turn affected service quality and customer retention. The study concluded that competitive salaries and non-monetary benefits improve employee performance and reduce turnover. The study recommended that hospitality businesses should provide attractive remuneration packages and career advancement opportunities to enhance employee loyalty and organizational growth.

Smith and Brown (2018) examined the relationship between compensation strategies and organizational performance in the technology industry, covering the period between 2000 and 2018. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design, utilizing primary data collected through questionnaires distributed to 300 employees in major tech companies. The study employed structural equation modeling (SEM) as the estimation technique. The study found that organizations with well-structured compensation packages, including stock options and performance-based bonuses, experienced higher innovation and lower employee turnover rates. The study concluded that compensation plays a critical role in retaining top talent and driving

organizational success. The study recommended that firms should align compensation policies with employee performance metrics to maximize organizational outcomes.

Ahmed and Shabbir (2017) investigated the impact of compensation on organizational performance in Pakistan's banking sector, covering the period from 2000 to 2017. The study utilized a descriptive survey research design and collected primary data from 250 bank employees through structured questionnaires. Multiple regression analysis was used as the main estimation technique with the aid of SPSS. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between employee compensation and organizational efficiency, with well-compensated employees exhibiting higher levels of commitment and customer service. The study concluded that fair and transparent compensation structures lead to increased employee engagement and performance. It recommended that banks should design incentive schemes to reward high-performing employees and enhance productivity.

Osawe and Ogbari (2015) studied the effect of employee compensation on organizational performance in Nigeria, covering the period between 2000 and 2015. The study adopted a survey research design and utilized primary data collected through structured questionnaires distributed to 200 employees in manufacturing firms in Lagos. Multiple regression analysis was employed using SPSS as the main estimation technique. The study found that employee compensation, including salaries, bonuses, and benefits, had a positive and significant effect on employee productivity and organizational profitability. The study concluded that organizations that offer competitive compensation packages experience better employee motivation and retention. It recommended that firms regularly review their compensation structures to maintain competitiveness and improve employee satisfaction.

## METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional analysis was conducted, as the data were collected at a specific point in time. The population of this study comprises of 18,951 academic staff of selected Universities in North-Central, Nigeria which was collected from the senior establishment office in the various universities.

**Table 3.1 Federal Universities in North Central and Their Current Staff Population**

S/N	UNIVERSITIES	NUMBER OF ACADEMIC STAFF
i.	University of Ilorin (UNILORIN)	3,023
ii.	University of Jos (UNIJOS)	2,954
iii.	Federal University, Lafia	1,567
iv.	Federal University, Lokoja	1785
v.	Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi	2,345
vi.	University of Abuja	2,034
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>13,708</b>

**Source: Researcher’s field work, 2025**

Conclusions can only be drawn if the sample size is a true representative of the population to which generalization can be made. In choosing the sample size and securing representative responses, this study adopted Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula stated below:

$$S = \frac{X^2NP(1 - P)}{d^2(N - 1) + X^2P(1 - P)}$$

S = Required sample size

X<sup>2</sup> = The table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841)

N = The population size

P = The population proportion (assume to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size

D = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05)

Thus, a population of 907 has a sample size of

$$S = \frac{X^2NP(1 - P)}{d^2(N - 1) + X^2P(1 - P)}$$

$$S = \frac{3.841 \times 13,708 \times 0.50(1 - 0.50)}{0.0025(13,708 - 1) + 3.841 \times 0.50(1 - 0.50)}$$

$$S = \frac{2636.214 \times 0.50}{34.2675 + 0.96025}$$

$$S = \frac{13163.107}{35.22775}$$

$$S = 374$$

Thus, a total three hundred and seventy-Seven (374) academic staff were used across the selected Federal Universities in North Central.

**Allocation of Copies of Questionnaire to various selected Federal Universities**

S/N	Private Hospitals	Academic Staff Population	Allocation of Questionnaire
1	University of Ilorin (UNILORIN)	3,023	3,023/13,708 x 374 = 82
2	University of Jos (UNIJOS)	2,954	2,954/13,708 x 374 = 81

3	Federal University, Lafia	1,567	1,567/13,708 x 374 = <b>43</b>
4	Federal University, Lokoja	1785	1,785/13,708 x 374 = <b>49</b>
5	Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi	2,345	2,345/13,708 x 374 = <b>64</b>
6	University of Abuja	2,034	2,034/13,708 x 374 = <b>55</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,708</b>	<b>374</b>

Source: Author’s Computation, 2025

The multi-staged sampling technique which involves purposive sampling and simple random sampling in selecting the respondents. The primary data was sourced through a well-structured copy of questionnaire that were administered to the respective respondents. The multiple regression analysis was used because the study examined the effect employee career advancement and reward system on employee commitment.

**Model Specifications**

**Model for Hypothesis 1**

Regression Analysis

The mathematical model that describes how employee career advancement on commitment to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria is given in equation 2 below:

$$CW = f(ECA) \dots\dots\dots$$

Given that  $ECA = ETD + EMP$

Therefore,

$$ECA = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ETD_i + \beta_2 EMP + \mu_i \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where:

ECA is Employee Career Advancement

ETD is Employee Training and Development

EMP is Employee Mentorship Programme

$\beta_1 - 2$  are the coefficient values of Employee training/ development and Employee mentorship programme respectively.

**Model for Hypothesis 2**

Regression Analysis

The mathematical model that describes how reward system on quality of work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria is given in equation below:

$$QW = f(RS) \dots\dots\dots$$

Given that  $RS = ER + IR$

Therefore,

$$RS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 ER_i + \beta_2 IR_i + \mu_i \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where:

RS is Reward System

TS is Extrinsic Reward

IR is Intrinsic Reward

$\beta_1 - \beta_2$  are the coefficient values of Extrinsic and Intrinsic rewards respectively.

**Inferential Analysis**

Multiple regression analysis is used to examine the objectives of this study.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Out of 374 copies of questionnaire distributed across the selected Universities, 250 copies were duly filled and returned for the study.

**The Effect of effect of Employee Career Advancement on Commitment to Work of Selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria**

**Table 4: Model Summary for the Effect of Employee Career Advancement on Commitment to Work**

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.667 <sup>a</sup>	.585	.577	.383312288256300
a. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Training/Development, Employee Mentorship Programme				

**Source: Author’s Computations, 2025**

Table 4 presents the model summary of the employee career advancement and commitment to work. The table shows R-square to be 0.667. This implies that Employee Training/Development, Employee Mentorship Programme explained about 66.7% of variation in employee commitment to work of Selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria

**Table 5: ANOVA for the Effect of Employee Career Advancement on Commitment to Work**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	39.246	2	19.623	66.778	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	41.728	284	.147		
	Total	80.974	288			
a. Dependent Variable: Employee commitment to work						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Employee Training/Development, Employee Mentorship Programme						

**Source: Author’s Computations, 2025**

The F-statistic of the regression result revealed a value of 66.778 with a p-value of 0.000, which signifies that the statistic is significant. This implies that the overall model is statistically significant and in good fit. This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected

**Table 6: Regression Coefficient for the Effect of Employee Career Advancement on Commitment to Work**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	.902	.220		4.099	.000
	Employee Training/Development	.181	.062	.168	2.913	.004
	Employee Mentorship Programme	.318	.057	.355	5.529	.000

**Source: Author’s Computations, 2025**

Investigating the effect of Employee Career Advancement on Commitment to Work, the result revealed that Employee Training/Development, Employee Mentorship Programme have significant coefficients (0.181, and 0.318). Employee Training/Development, Employee Mentorship Programme have significant coefficients because their p-values of 0.004 and 0.000 are lower than 0.05 significance level.

Employee Training/Development and Employee Mentorship Programme all have positive coefficients, signifying that they all have positive effect on commitment to work. This implies that an increase in each of Employee Training/Development and Employee Mentorship Programme will lead to increase in employee commitment to work.

Specifically, a point increase in Employee Training/Development will lead to 0.181 points increase in employee commitment to work. Similarly, a point increase in Employee Mentorship Programme will lead to 0.318 points increase in employee commitment to work in selected Federal University

**Effect of Reward System on Quality of Work of Selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria**

Table 7: Model Summary for the Reward System and Quality of Work

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.718 <sup>a</sup>	.616	.608	.334047312198735
a. Predictors: (Constant), Extrinsic Reward, Intrinsic Reward				

**Source: Author’s Computations, 2025**

Table 7 presents the model summary of Reward System and Quality of Work. The table shows R-square to be 0.616. This implies that Extrinsic Reward and Intrinsic Reward explained about 61.6% of variation in employee quality of work in the selected Federal Universities.

Table 8: ANOVA for the Reward System and Quality of Work

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	28.738	2	14.369	64.385	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	27.004	242	.112		
	Total	55.743	246			
a. Dependent Variable: employee quality of work						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Extrinsic Reward, Intrinsic Reward						

**Source: Author’s Computations, 2025**

Table 8 presents the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the model. F-statistic is shown with value 64.385 and probability value 0.000 indicating the reported F-statistic is significant, which implies that the overall model is fit. This implies that the null hypothesis was rejected

**Table 9: Regression Coefficient for the Reward System and Quality of Work**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.756	.230		3.286	.001
	Extrinsic Reward	.289	.060	.299	4.941	.000
	Intrinsic Reward	.351	.061	.365	5.757	.000

**Source: Author’s Computations, 2025**

Table 9 presents the coefficients of the Reward System and Quality of Work, the result revealed that Extrinsic Reward and Intrinsic Reward have significant coefficients (0.289 and 0.351). Extrinsic Reward and Intrinsic Reward have significant coefficient because their p-values of 0.000, 0.000 are less than 0.05 significance level

Extrinsic Reward and Intrinsic Reward all have positive coefficients, signifying that they all have positive effect. This implies that an increase in each of these variables will lead to increase in employee quality of work of selected Federal Universities. Specifically, a point increase in Extrinsic Reward will lead to 0.289 points increase in employee quality of work of selected Federal Universities. Similarly, a point increase in Intrinsic Reward will lead to 0.351 points increase in employee quality of work of selected Federal Universities.

**Discussion of Findings**

It was established from the first findings that employee career advancement significantly affects employee commitment to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. This implies that employee career advancement is one of the strategies to improve commitment to work, the study showed that employee training/ development and employee mentorship programmes can help to increase the employee commitment to work. This findings justifies McClelland’s Theory of Needs which was developed by David C. McClelland in 1961. The theory is based on psychological framework that explains human motivation based on three fundamental needs: the need for achievement (nAch), the need for affiliation (nAff), and the need for power (nPow). According to the theory, individuals are driven by different combinations of these needs, which influence their behavior in the workplace. The need for achievement (nAch) refers to an individual’s desire for excellence, goal-setting, and success in challenging tasks. Employees with a high need for achievement are motivated by performance-based incentives, recognition, and personal growth opportunities (Noe et al., 2021). The need for affiliation (nAff) represents an individual’s drive to build relationships and feel accepted in a social or professional setting. Employees with this need value a positive work environment, teamwork, and social recognition, making reward systems and job satisfaction key motivators (Lussier&Achua, 2022). The need for power (nPow) reflects an individual’s desire to control, influence, or lead others. Employees with a high need for power are motivated by leadership roles, authority, and positions

that allow them to make significant organizational decisions (Miner, 2015). This finding is in agreement with the work of Ahmed and Shabbir (2017) which revealed a significant positive relationship between employee advancement programme and organizational efficiency. The study concluded that fair and transparent compensation structures and career advancement programmes lead to increased employee commitment to work and high performance.

Lastly, it was established from the second findings that reward system affects quality of work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. The hypothesis proved that there is a significant effect reward system and quality of work. This implies that, a well-structured reward system enhances employee quality of work and commitment to work. The study also showed that organizations with comprehensive reward systems often experience lower turnover rates and higher innovation levels. This finding justifies the equity theory which was introduced by John Stacey Adams (1963). Equity theory suggests that individuals engage in social comparison by comparing their efforts and rewards with those of relevant others. The perception of individuals about the fairness of their rewards relative to others influences their level of motivation. Equity exists when individuals perceive that the ratio of efforts to rewards is the same for them as it is for others to whom they compare themselves. This finding is in agreement with the work of Khan and Ahmad (2017) who posited that performance-based incentives, salary increments, and recognition positively influenced employee productivity and overall firm performance. It also revealed that organizations that implement effective reward systems experience higher job satisfaction and improved performance.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings highlighted above, this study makes the following conclusion:

Employee career advancement is also an important tool to boosting staff commitment to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. The study revealed that through continuous training and development, learning, employees acquire new skills, knowledge, and perspectives, which they can then bring into their roles, leading to improved performance and innovation in the University system. When employees see opportunities for growth and advancement within their current organization, it ignites a sense of ambition and purpose. They become more driven to achieve their goals, contributing to increased engagement and overall job satisfaction.

Finally, reward system has positive effect on quality of work. The study revealed that as the job satisfaction of the motivated and rewarded employee increases, his commitment to the University system and work efficiency also increases. This shows that rewarding employees for their achievements have a positive effect on employee motivation and performance. The study also revealed that when staff members of the Universities are empowered with extrinsic and intrinsic incentives such as bonuses, gift cards, time off, recognition awards, and heartfelt words of appreciation. These rewards reinforce desired behaviors, build loyalty, and foster high quality work and engagement.

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study

- i) The study also recommended that universities should provide adequate career advisory services to its academic staff as well as have adequate and proper career development plan for its academic staff to improve on their overall performance. This will also help them in reconciling of

academic and administrative roles. In addition, to improve the performance of academic staff in the universities, career advancement should be based on competencies of academic staff, equity and merit and more scholarships should be awarded to the academic staff to enable them advance career-wise. Further, universities should have proper performance appraisal system that can be used to determine attainment of set goals like training needs and career needs of their academic staff among others.

- ii) The study recommended that Universities can develop more effective reward systems such as extrinsic and intrinsic rewards (Monetary and non-monetary) that can motivate their employees. By providing employees with the right incentives, universities can improve employee motivation and job satisfaction, which can ultimately lead to higher productivity and organisational success.

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