An Appraisal of Wage Payment System and Employees' Performance in the Oil and Gas Industry in Lagos State

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Abstract

In any organisation, the performance of the employees depends much on wage payment. Although it was important, some employers did not have a suitable wage payment system, which in turn affected employees' performance. The study investigated the impact of wage system on employees' performance in the Oil and Gas industry in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study was based on three factors: salary structures and workplace efficiency (SSWE), wage satisfaction and organisational impact (WSOI), and employee perception (EMP). This study adopted a survey research design, which is quantitative in nature. The population for this study was 200 staff of an Oil and Gas industry in Lagos headquarters, while the sample size of 115 was computed using Taro Yamane's formula. Data were collected by using a structured questionnaire, and data were analysed by regression and ANOVA. The results of the study indicated that the variables, such as wage satisfaction and employee perception, have weaker or non-significant relationships with employees' performance, whereas salary structure and workplace efficiency have a significant positive impact on employees' performance. The study further revealed that, although financial incentives are relevant, not all of the wage-related factors have equal importance in relation to the outcome of an employee. The study found that scheduled and transparent compensation systems are relevant to improving the productivity and performance of the organisation as a whole.

Keywords: Wage payment system, employees' performance, Nigerian oil and gas industry.

Introduction

The oil and gas industry plays a significant role in the economy of Nigeria, as more than 70% of the government's revenue is generated by this sector. The sector also generates more than 90% of the foreign exchange earnings. This implies that the sector plays a critical role in the economic stability of Nigeria (Edem et al., 2022). Overdependence on oil exposes Nigeria to fluctuations in the global price, thereby impacting economic stability. Wage system in the Nigerian oil and gas industry is highly significant; it helps in shaping the economic landscape, and it influences the dynamics of labour. It is germane in motivating employees in a given organisation.

Pay is still an important factor in workers' productivity. Although it is expected by law that compensation is paid to employees to validate the contract of employees, the nature of reward can also attract, motivate and retain employees if properly designed. Otherwise, it can cause a low level of job applications, a low level of employee motivation and trigger a high rate of departure of employees (Akinbode & Oyelude, 2020). According to Suleiman et al. (2022), reward is defined as all types of valuable consideration that define the working relationship between employee and employer. This can be either monetary (e.g., wages, bonuses, incentives, and other benefits) and non-monetary in nature (e.g., recognition, gifts, awards and other accolades from employers). This makes wages create attraction among employees to work enthusiastically and willingly for an organisation (Prajapati & Khuju, 2023).

Employee performance measures an employee's ability to perform his/her job role and the contribution he/she makes to organisational objectives. It covers quantitative (output) and qualitative (efficiency and accuracy) elements of job performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). An organisation's success and failure hinge on employee performance. Guan & Frenkel (2018) defined employee performance as the ability or capability of a person to carry out certain tasks within the framework of his/her knowledge, skills, and job demands. According to Jabeen & Rahim (2021), it is the non-financial or financial outcomes that are directly related to an organisation's performance and success, which are the employees. These approaches highlight that employee performance is complex and refers to both performance products and employee behaviour on the job. Individual employee performance is a key to the success of the organisation as a whole because it is the performance of all the employees that makes up the performance of the organisation. High employee performance is essential for getting a competitive advantage and inspiring innovation and success. Just one small change in employee performance can lead to a big difference in the organisation's performance. On the contrary, poor performance can result in inefficiencies, increased turnover and decreased profits (Gupta, 2020). Several indicators can be used to measure the performance of the employees, such as absenteeism rates, production defects, error rates, and other feedback mechanisms, such as 360-degree feedback evaluation and 720-degree feedback evaluation (Vulpen, 2024). Organisations will need to continuously assess various factors that impact the workforce if they wish to maintain their high performance, such as organisational culture, training, leadership, work environment and most importantly, compensation systems.

The idea of paying wages is not novel, as it can be traced back to early civilisations, where barter systems were employed (Kumar, 2018). Wage payment systems are how employees are paid for their work. Pay is still a key factor in workers' productivity. Wage is the remuneration given in exchange for employees' labour or services; the appropriate wage payment method varies based on organisational needs and a proper understanding of each method and its work environment. Wage payments are made in various ways, such as time rate, piece rate, incentive wage and balance/mixed method. Amongst the various wage payment systems, time-rate and piece-rate systems have been dominant from the 18th century through the mid-20th century (Igbal et al., 2019). The time-rate system is the oldest wage payment method; it calculates wages based on time spent at work, such as hourly or monthly rates. While it can provide a stable income for workers, it can also be very labour-intensive and difficult to avoid inefficiencies (Solomon & Sime, 2022).

The piece-rate system is based on output, encouraging labourers to push their output to the detriment of productivity and even health (Deka, 2020). Reward systems are used to pay extra wages to workers who perform more than the standard amount. These systems can be personal or group-based, it can encourage personal excellence or team collaboration. Balanced wage systems are a mix of the two methods where they are best suited, but guarantee stability with the use of bonuses or commissions to motivate performance (Francis, 2024). This work was designed to investigate the effect of wage payment systems on employees' performance, calculating three salient factors: Salary Structures and Workplace Efficiency (SSWE), Wage Satisfaction and Organisational Impact (WSOI), and Employee Perception (EMP).

Literature Review

Employee’s Performance

Human resources are the properties of an organisation, and the performance of the employees is essential to an organisation's success in achieving its goals. An employee's performance is their ability to meet the expectations of their duties and his/her contribution to the organisational objectives. It covers both output (quantitative) and efficiency and accuracy (qualitative) of work performance (Armstrong & Taylor, 2019). A significant factor in the success or failure of an organisation is employees' performance. Guan & Frenkel (2018) stated that employee performance refers to how well an employee performs a specific task in relation to the extent of his or her knowledge, expertise and job needs. In addition, AlAbri et al. (2022) argued that the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation's employees have a direct impact on the organisation's growth and success. These views may highlight the complexity of employee performance, both in terms of what they produce and how they behave in the workplace.

Borman & Motowidlo (2019) opined that dimensions of employee performance can be categorised into the following:

i. Task performance is the ability of an employee to perform assigned tasks or duties effectively. To meet standards of employment, meet goals, and complete assigned responsibilities within the established time frame

ii. Contextual performance is the dimensions of performance that are not directly relevant to the task, including teamwork, cooperation and initiative. Although contextual performance is not directly job-related, it has a positive impact on the workplace climate and contributes to group productivity (Armstrong, 2021).

iii. Adaptive performance is an employee's capacity to adapt, learn, and deal with a dynamic environment. Adaptive performance is a key factor in industries that require quick technological changes or a variable work environment (Ojeleye, 2017).

iv. Counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) includes behaviours that negatively impact the organisation, such as absenteeism, workplace conflicts, fraud, or intentional errors (Sharma, 2022).

Intrinsic and extrinsic factors affect employee performance; intrinsic factors include job satisfaction, skills and personal work ethics (Huselid, 2018). High intrinsic motivation is associated with better performance, even if there are no external rewards for it (Borman & Motowidlo, 2020). These factors include motivation, job satisfaction, skill set, and personal work ethics. People who are driven from within exhibit better performance. Extrinsic factors are external factors like wage system, working conditions, and management style (Sharma, 2022).

There are different ways of assessing employees' performance by the organisation to ensure that they meet the organisation's goals and productivity expectations. The commonly used approach is the key performance indicators (KPIs), which are measurable metrics that indicate employee effectiveness, like task completion rate, defect rate, and customer satisfaction (Armstrong, 2021). These measures offer a factual view of what an employee has been contributing, and allow managers to track progress. The 360-degree evaluation is another key assessment technique that requires input from a variety of sources, such as supervisors, peers, and employees (Hansen et al., 2025). This is a holistic evaluation of the task and contextual behaviours, including teamwork and leadership skills. Organisations can take a holistic view of employee strengths and areas for development by integrating a variety of viewpoints. Furthermore, objective-based performance reviews assess employees' performance by their ability to reach the goals and meet deadlines (Huselid, 2018). This approach focuses on outcomes and performance by measuring if employees are achieving targets within a given timeframe. These performance measurement methods can be used together to provide a fair and comprehensive evaluation of employees' contributions.

Wage Payment System

Cambridge Dictionary (2023) defines wages as the money earned by an employee. It is paid for the hours that are used for work. The basis which determines the salary of the employees is determined by the system used by the organisation. There are various wage payment systems, including the time rate system, piece rate system, bonus and incentive system, the commission-based system, profit sharing and stock options. There are three significant and most commonly employed wage systems, namely the time rate wage system, piece rate wage system and balanced or mixed wage system (Sunitha, 2017).

Wage payment systems have a great influence on employee performance as they affect their motivation, job satisfaction and productivity. Rewards like performance-based and time-based pay influence employee engagement with their jobs and with the job's objectives (Gupta, 2020). The piece rate system that links wages directly to output encourages workers to do the work effectively, thus promoting productivity (Sule, 2019). This can sometimes result in a high workload and poor quality of work. In contrast, a fixed wage system (time) does not give workers an incentive to exceed the minimum standards, but it does guarantee the completion of assigned tasks and improve attention to quality (Okoye & Nwoye, 2022). One of the most crucial connections is between wage systems and work quality. By using the time rate system, workers can concentrate on accuracy and conformance to specifications, minimising defects and helping to maintain company standards (Okoye & Nwoye, 2022). The wage system should be well-designed to balance output incentives with quality control. A hybrid system, like a balanced wage method, can be used to offer stability in income and incentives based on performance to keep employees motivated and dedicated to their work. Employers who tie pay to performance and employee health are more likely to keep workers productive and happy.

Challenges in Wage Payment Structure

Many challenges accompany the implementation and management of these systems that can cause inefficiencies, dissatisfaction and legal problems if not managed properly. The challenges are:

i. Unequal pay: One of the most important issues is that employees feel that their pay is equitable relative to other employees in and outside the organisation. Adams' Equity Theory (1965) states that the perceived fairness by employees is based on comparing their input-output ratio (effort/reward) with others.

ii. In systems like incentive-based or mixed wage payments, it is important for employee performance to be accurately measured. Subjective or hard-to-quantify performance metrics can apply in creative and team-oriented jobs. The poor transparency or misalignment of performance appraisal processes negatively affects the incentive pay system and creates mistrust among employees (Armstrong, 2010).

iii. Resistance to Change: Staff members who are used to a particular remuneration system may not want to change to a new system. Such resistance may be due to fear of income insecurities or lack of knowledge of the new system. For instance, moving from a salary-based to a performance-based compensation plan can lead to anxiety for individuals who prefer a more stable paycheck.

iv. Legal and Regulatory Compliance: Companies need to comply with the labour laws and wage regulations, which differ from one region and industry to another. To prevent discriminatory practices in the distribution of wages, organisations need to stay up-to-date on minimum wage increases, overtime regulations, and taxes.

v. Wage System Design and Sustainability: Balancing the needs of employees with the financial well-being of the organisation can be a difficult task when designing a wage system. However, using incentives too much can lead to a greater amount of uncertainty when it comes to payroll, and the high wages can become burdensome on those budgets, particularly in small businesses or start-ups.

The Vroom expectancy theory and reinforcement theory are used to ground this study. Vroom (1964) suggested that employees are motivated to work according to the outcomes that they anticipate they will get from their actions. The theory states that people will invest more effort in a job if they think their efforts will result in a reward. This motivation is based on the assumption that work will lead to success, and that success will lead to being rewarded with something useful. Effort, performance and reward play a significant role in the theory, as does the clarity of external incentives.

As a key concern in wage payment systems, expectancy theory focuses on the matching of employees' expectations and their pay. Reinforcement theory was first described by Skinner (1953) and is based on Thorndike's law of effect, which proposes that positive reinforcement increases the likelihood of a behaviour being repeated, and negative reinforcement decreases the likelihood of a behaviour happening again. This is the principle that is widely used in the field of motivating people in the workplace, especially in the conception of wage payment systems, which provide financial rewards to reinforce high performance. Skinner introduced the concept of operant conditioning, which classified reinforcement into positive, negative, punishment, and extinction. Positive reinforcement, like performance incentives, pay increases, and promotions, helps to reinforce positive behaviour. Negative reinforcement – taking away tasks people don't like because they do well can also be effective in motivating them. However, if implemented thoughtfully, punishment, like pay deductions for poor performance, and extinction (ignoring positive behaviours) can help to suppress unwanted behaviours and yet have a negative effect on employee morale if not done properly.

Nwafili et al. (2023) discussed compensation management and its effect on employee performance in the manufacturing industry, specifically on the time rate wage payment system. The study was carried out in the selected manufacturing companies in Nigeria. The quantitative research approach was used in the study, which involved the use of a structured questionnaire to be distributed to the employees in the various departments. The results showed that the time rate system was financially stable and created job security for the employee, which resulted in better employee morale, decreased employee turnover, and improved commitment to organisational objectives.

The study also identified that in the absence of incentives, the employees were not incentivised to do more than the baseline duties, which resulted in complacency in some cases when they received fixed wages. Again, Umaru & Gana (2021) examined the effect of different piece-rate pay systems on the performance of the employees in Satcom Block Industry, Nasarawa, Nigeria. The methodology used was a quantitative method and data were collected using a structured questionnaire from employees of various departments in the organisation. The four different piece rate pay schemes were used: low piece rate pay, equilibrium piece rate pay, high piece rate pay, and partial piece rate pay. A multiple regression analysis was used to evaluate the relationships between these pay structures and employee performance. The results indicated that both low and partial piece-rate pay had an impact on employees' performance, which in turn caused a reduction in the level of motivation and productivity. On the other hand, non-equilibrium and high piece-rate pay was positive as well, increasing output and efficiency by incentivising employees.

Brosig-Koch et al. (2017) undertook a study to see how mixed wage systems (a combination of fixed wage and incentives) affect service quality and productivity in the healthcare sector. The study targeted physicians in a controlled experimental environment and employed a quasi-experimental research design to examine the impact of the various wage structures on service output. The researchers collected quantitative data by examining the physicians' performance across the different payment structures (fixed salaries, piece-rate pay, and a combination). The results indicated that mixed wage systems considerably lowered the number of service defects and enhanced the quality of healthcare service in general by providing financial stability and encouraging high performance.

Methodology

This study used a survey research design and a quantitative approach. The population comprises the staff of the Oil and Gas Industry in Lagos, totalling 200, while the sample size of 115 was calculated using Taro Yamane’s formula. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire, and it was analysed using regression and ANOVA.

Results

The relationship between wage payment systems and employee performance, with a focus on the following key components: salary Structures and Workplace Efficiency (SSWE), Wage Satisfaction and Organisational Impact (WSOI), and Employee Perception (EMP), was revealed.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.465a	.216	.193	.94032	2.267

Table 1 shows the model summary of multiple regression analysing the relationship between wage payment systems - salary structures and workplace efficiency (SSWE), wage satisfaction and organisational impact (WSOI), employee perception (EMP)—and employee performance. The multiple correlation coefficient (R) is 0.465, indicating a moderate positive relationship. The R Square value of 0.216 suggests that about 21.6% of the variation in employee performance is explained by the model, while the Adjusted R Square of 0.193 accounts for the number of predictors, slightly lowering the explanatory power. The Standard Error of 9.4032 implies considerable variation not explained by the model, indicating a less precise fit.

Table 2: ANOVAb

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25.140	3	8.380	9.477	.000b
	Residual	91.073	103	.884		
	Total	116.213	106			

a. Dependent Variable: EP
b. Predictors: (Constant), WSOI, EMP, SSWE

Table 2 shows the ANOVA results which examine the combined effect of Wage Satisfaction and Organisational Impact (WSOI), Employee Perception (EMP), and Salary Structures and Workplace Efficiency (SSWE) on Employee Performance (EP). The model is statistically significant, with an F-value of 9.477 and a p-value of .000, indicating the predictors significantly impact employee performance. The regression explains a meaningful portion of the variance (Sum of Squares: Regression = 25.140; Residual = 91.073; Total = 116.213). Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected, confirming that the predictors collectively influence employee performance.

Table 3: Coefficientsa

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig
1	(Constant)	.684	.396		1.726	.087
	EMP	.057	.080	.067	.707	.481
	SSWE	.903	.200	.499	4.506	.000
	WSOI	-.375	.206	-.188	-1.820	.072

a. Dependent Variable: EP

Table 3 presents a multiple regression analysis exploring the relationship between wage payment components - Employee Perception (EMP), Salary Structures and Workplace Efficiency (SSWE), and Wage Satisfaction and Organisational Impact (WSOI), and organisational performance. SSWE shows a significant positive impact on performance (B = 0.903, p = 0.000; Beta = 0.499), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. However, EMP has no significant effect (B = 0.057, p = 0.481), and WSOI shows a negative but marginally non-significant relationship (B = -0.375, p = 0.072), which suggests potential for further research.

Discussion

This study explored the effects of wage payment systems on employee performance in the oil and gas industry in Lagos State, specifically looking at three areas: Salary Structures and Workplace Efficiency (SSWE), Wage Satisfaction and Organisational Impact (WSOI), and Employee Perception (EMP). The findings of multiple regression analysis show that the three variables have a moderate positive relationship with each other and employees' performance, with a correlation coefficient (R) obtained is 0.465. This indicates a positive correlation, but no strong relationship. The R-squared value is 0.216, indicating that approximately 21.6 % of the variance in employee performance can be accounted for by the three variables SSWE, WSOI, and EMP together; 78.4 % of the variance in employee performance is most likely due to other external or organisational factors not measured by the three variables. This finding is consistent with the findings of Nwafili et al. (2023) and Dumaguing (2018).

The ANOVA test also shows the statistical significance of the model. The model has an F-value of 9.477 and a p-value of 0.000, which is below the standard p-value of 0.05. This result supports that the three predictors have a significant impact on employee performance, and the null hypothesis of no impact of the three predictors on employee performance is rejected. This outcome agrees with the studies by Umaru & Gana (2021) and Francis (2024). Employee performance was found to be influenced by the most significant variable, Salary Structures and Workplace Efficiency (SSWE), when considering each variable individually in multiple linear regression (B = 0.903, p = 0.000). This means that improved remuneration systems and effective workplaces play significant roles in improving performance. The findings are also consistent with those of Okoye & Nwoye (2022) and Ojeleye (2017), who conclude that good salary structure and good working environment play a significant role in improving performance.

Employee Perception (EMP), on the other hand, did not have a statistically significant effect (B = 0.057, p = 0.481), implying that the perception of the wage system by employees alone does not have a direct impact on the performance outcome significantly.

Wage Satisfaction and Organisational Impact (WSOI) was not significantly related to performance, though it was slightly negative (B = -0.375, p = 0.072). The p-value is not statistically significant; however, the value is very close to the threshold, and this may indicate dissatisfaction or perceived unfairness in wage distribution, having a negative impact on performance and therefore, can form an area for further research.

The results corroborated with those of Solomon & Sime (2022) and Igbal et al. (2019), who revealed that wage payment systems have a positive overall effect on employee performance; the most impactful being the salary structure and efficiency of the workplace. But employees' perception and satisfaction with their earnings needs to be further explored to gain the full picture of their work and the potential of interaction with other dynamics at work.

Conclusion

The findings from the analysis of the data showed several aspects of the impact of wage payment systems on the performance of employees in the context of the Oil and Gas industry in Lagos. The results revealed that efficiency at work, salary scales and performance of employees had a strong and positive relationship. In contrast, other components, such as wage satisfaction and employee perception, had a weak or insignificant relationship with performance. This implies that, whilst financial incentives are a factor, not all wage-related factors are equal in determining the employee outcome. The results highlight the importance of well-designed and defined pay structures to enhance employee productivity and organisational performance. When the methods of wage payment are perceived as being fair, regular, and clearly connected to the productivity of the workplace, employee performance tends to improve. In contrast, employee perception had a weaker influence with only a small and limited effect on employee behaviour, suggesting that other organisational or motivational factors beyond employee perception of pay are influencing employee behaviours.

Additionally, the study emphasises the multifaceted and complex dimension of performance motivation. Wages are fundamental, but can have a greater or lesser impact on their pervasiveness if they are managed and communicated within the wider organisational context. The findings indicated that, besides the structure of payment systems, efforts should also be made to understand and interpret the payment systems by employees.

This study provides useful information on the effect of wage payment systems on employee performance. Its findings can be used to inform strategic HR policies aimed at improving organisational efficiency and employee motivation, identifying salary structures, and understanding workplace efficiency. Companies looking to improve their performance in the future should strive to strike a balance between fair compensation and making an effort to address employees' overall needs and perceptions to foster a motivated and high-performing workforce.

Based on this study, the following recommendations are made:

i. Implementation of a pay-for-performance approach
ii. Review and Salaries Adjustment (RSA).
iii. Reward effort in addition to Equity.
iv. Decision-making regarding pay and bonuses should be well communicated from management to staff.

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