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PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEMS AND RECOGNITION PRACTICES AS CORRELATES OF TEACHERS' WORK MOTIVATION IN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated performance appraisal systems and recognition practices as correlates of teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted, guided by four research questions and four corresponding null hypotheses. The population comprised 5,676 teachers across 367 public senior secondary schools, from which a sample of 400 teachers was drawn using a multistage sampling procedure. Data were collected using three researcher-developed instruments: the Performance Appraisal Systems Scale (PASS), Recognition Practices Scale (RPS), and Teachers' Work Motivation Scale (TWMS). The instruments were validated by experts, and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were 0.86 (PASS), 0.83 (RPS), and 0.82 (TWMS). Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) answered research questions 1–4, while the t-test for Pearson r tested hypotheses 1–4 at the 0.05 significance level. Findings showed that classroom observation, structured feedback mechanisms, commendation letters and awards for outstanding performance had significant positive relationships with teachers' work motivation. The study concluded that effective implementation of performance appraisal systems and recognition practices enhances teachers' work motivation, and recommended that school administrators institutionalise objective appraisal systems and strengthen recognition practices to sustain motivation and improve educational outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Performance Appraisal Systems, Recognition Practices, Teachers' Work Motivation Public Secondary Schools

INTRODUCTION

Secondary education prepares students for higher academic pursuits and productive livelihoods. It plays a pivotal role in shaping the future workforce and producing citizens capable of addressing contemporary challenges in Nigeria and beyond. It serves as the bridge between the foundational knowledge acquired in primary school and the specialised skills demanded at tertiary institutions or in the workforce. It aims to develop cognitive, social and practical competencies in adolescents, thereby preparing them for further education, vocational training or productive participation in society. The secondary education system also provides a supportive environment and source of motivation for teachers to enhance their work engagement.

Consequently, Ezeani and Ololube (2023) define teachers' work motivation as the internal and external forces that encourage teachers to plan lessons effectively, engage learners actively, assess learning outcomes diligently and contribute to school development. It encompasses the drives that energise, direct and sustain teachers' commitment to carrying out their instructional and professional duties effectively. It also includes the psychological, social and organisational factors that foster teachers' enthusiasm, persistence and willingness to invest effort in teaching tasks and school goals. More broadly, it is understood as the extent to which incentives, job satisfaction, professional growth opportunities and supportive working conditions shape teachers' dedication, morale and engagement at work. Thus, it reflects the zeal, interest and commitment teachers show in planning lessons, delivering instruction, managing classrooms and participating in school activities to achieve educational objectives.

Furthermore, the need for teacher work motivation in public secondary schools has become an essential concern in modern educational discourse because of its direct influence on instructional quality and student outcomes. Teacher motivation significantly determines the level of effort, persistence and commitment teachers invest in their professional duties, and so shapes classroom effectiveness. Motivated teachers are more likely to adopt innovative teaching practices, demonstrate resilience in challenging environments and foster positive learning climates that enhance student engagement. The key indicators of teachers' work motivation include job satisfaction, commitment to duty, punctuality and regular attendance, instructional enthusiasm, participation in professional development, a positive attitude to

work, effective classroom management and sustained effort towards students' learning outcomes. When these indicators are evident, teachers demonstrate higher morale, creativity and perseverance in teaching tasks. Their absence reflects low motivation and reduced instructional effectiveness within secondary schools. In other words, highly motivated teachers show enthusiasm in teaching, punctuality, creativity in instructional delivery and sustained interest in students' academic success. On the other hand, low motivation manifests in absenteeism, minimal lesson preparation, reduced classroom engagement and poor professional commitment. In the Nigerian context, persistent concerns about declining teacher morale in public secondary schools have been attributed to inadequate professional support, ineffective appraisal systems and a lack of recognition, which collectively undermine teachers' enthusiasm for their work.

A performance appraisal system is defined by Armstrong and Taylor (2023) as a structured organisational process used to systematically evaluate employees' job performance, competencies and professional development needs over a specified period. In the school setting, it refers to a structured and systematic process for evaluating teachers' effectiveness, professional competencies and overall job performance. It involves continuous assessment mechanisms aimed at improving productivity and aligning individual performance with institutional goals. It is also a formal organisational practice that provides feedback, identifies training needs and supports professional development. The importance of a performance appraisal system is that it provides formal feedback and evidence-based judgments that guide decisions on training, promotion, rewards and overall workforce effectiveness. In educational settings such as public secondary schools, appraisal systems are important for enhancing teaching quality, accountability and student learning outcomes.

Nevertheless, performance appraisal systems in secondary schools typically comprise several interrelated components that ensure objective and developmental evaluation of teachers' effectiveness. These components include classroom observation, self-assessment and peer review, and structured feedback mechanisms that provide constructive guidance for professional improvement. Others include performance planning, performance standards and evaluation criteria, feedback and performance review, professional development, and proper documentation of appraisal outcomes. When these components are systematically integrated, appraisal systems become more transparent and supportive, and better able to promote improved teaching quality and organisational effectiveness in secondary schools.

Classroom observation is the systematic process of monitoring and assessing a teacher's instructional practices, classroom management, and student engagement during actual

teaching. It is a key tool for evaluating and improving teaching effectiveness because it provides real-time insight into instructional delivery and learning outcomes. It enables appraisers to gather objective data that inform feedback, professional growth, and decisions on teacher performance. Structured feedback mechanisms are organised, systematic ways of communicating performance information to teachers after appraisal activities. Feedback is evaluative information given to employees regarding their performance, and to be effective, it must be clear, objective, and constructive. Such mechanisms ensure that feedback is consistent and evidence-based, and that it identifies strengths, weaknesses, and actionable improvement strategies.

Furthermore, Nwachukwu and Onuoha (2024) defined recognition practices as the formal and informal ways through which school management acknowledges and rewards teachers' efforts, achievements and professional contributions. More broadly, recognition practices are the systematic and intentional activities through which organisations acknowledge, appreciate and reward employees' efforts, behaviours and achievements in the workplace. They encompass both formal and informal approaches used to reinforce desirable work behaviours and align employees with institutional goals. These practices are considered vital for motivating employees, improving job satisfaction and enhancing organisational commitment by making workers feel valued and respected for their contributions. They are also non-monetary forms of reward that a teacher can receive for dedication and commitment to the job. Recognition practices are essential in organisations because they play a significant role in enhancing employee motivation, commitment and overall productivity. Consistent recognition of employees' efforts fosters a sense of belonging and encourages improved service delivery and job performance.

The components of recognition practices include commendation letters, awards for outstanding performance and public acknowledgement during staff meetings (Nwachukwu & Onuoha, 2024). Others include verbal appreciation, promotion opportunities and formal recognition programmes designed to acknowledge outstanding performance. In addition, timely feedback and public acknowledgement are essential components that reinforce positive behaviour and encourage continuous improvement among employees. These components ensure that recognition practices remain holistic, consistent and impactful within organisational settings.

A commendation letter is a formal written acknowledgement issued by school authorities to appreciate teachers' outstanding performance, dedication and professional contributions. Commendation letters serve as symbolic and psychological rewards that publicly validate

teachers' efforts, reinforce desirable work behaviours and communicate institutional approval of instructional effectiveness. In schools, such letters of appreciation function as non-financial incentives that enhance teachers' sense of worth, professional identity and organisational belonging, thereby promoting increased work motivation and sustained commitment to teaching tasks. In addition, awards for outstanding performance are formal honours or distinctions granted to teachers in appreciation of exceptional instructional effectiveness, dedication and professional contributions within the school system. Such awards function as symbolic rewards that validate teachers' efforts and reinforce desirable work behaviours, thereby strengthening intrinsic motivation and commitment to teaching tasks. Studies have shown that recognition of outstanding performance is associated with improved morale, instructional quality and job performance among teachers. Consequently, consistent award practices create a positive organisational climate that sustains teachers' enthusiasm, productivity and long-term professional engagement.

Consequently, the interplay between performance appraisal systems and recognition practices is particularly significant in shaping teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools. Effective appraisal provides objective evidence of teachers' performance, while recognition translates appraisal outcomes into meaningful rewards and acknowledgement. Together, these organisational practices create a supportive professional climate that reinforces teachers' sense of competence and professional worth. Studies have shown that when appraisal results are linked with recognition, teachers are more motivated to set higher professional goals, engage in continuous professional development and adopt innovative instructional strategies. In contrast, appraisal without recognition may be perceived as punitive, whereas recognition without systematic appraisal may appear biased or inconsistent. Therefore, integrating both practices is essential for fostering a balanced motivational environment in schools.

Given the situation above, examining performance appraisal systems and recognition practices as correlates of teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State becomes imperative. Understanding how these organisational variables relate to motivation will provide empirical insights for school administrators and policymakers to design effective teacher management strategies. Strengthening appraisal procedures to be fair, transparent and development-oriented, alongside implementing consistent recognition practices, may significantly enhance teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Ultimately, improving teachers' work motivation is crucial for achieving quality teaching, improved student achievement and sustainable educational development in public secondary schools.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers' work motivation is critical to educational effectiveness, particularly in public secondary schools in Rivers State, as it shapes commitment, instructional delivery, classroom management, and willingness to exceed minimum expectations. Yet evidence suggests many Nigerian teachers show declining enthusiasm, marked by lateness, irregular attendance, poor lesson preparation, and limited student engagement, linked to poor working conditions and inadequate incentives that undermine productivity and professional commitment. Observable attitudes among teachers in Rivers State further point to growing complacency and low morale, with routine compliance often replacing genuine dedication. This diminished motivation manifests as weak lesson delivery, limited innovative teaching, and poor student-teacher interaction, ultimately lowering student performance.

Teachers also appear less committed to professional growth, showing low participation in training, extracurricular duties, and initiative, suggesting a disconnect between their roles and their motivation, with direct implications for student success. This is compounded by systemic issues such as irregular promotion, inadequate recognition, and weak management practices. Many teachers feel undervalued and unappraised, fostering frustration and disengagement, as structured performance appraisal and recognition systems remain largely absent. Given these concerns, this study sought to determine whether performance appraisal systems and recognition practices relate to the low motivation, poor attitudes, and reduced commitment observed among teachers in public secondary schools in Rivers State, and whether effective appraisal and recognition strategies can significantly improve teachers' motivation, performance, and dedication.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine performance appraisal systems and recognition practices as correlates of teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study sought to:

1. Determine the correlation between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the correlation between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. Determine the correlation between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

4. Ascertain the correlation between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the correlation between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State?
2. What is the correlation between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State?
3. What is the correlation between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State?
4. What is the correlation between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant correlation between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant correlation between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
3. There is no significant correlation between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.
4. There is no significant correlation between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationships between Performance Appraisal Systems, Recognition Practices, and Teachers' Work Motivation in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, Nigeria. The population comprised 5,676 teachers from 367 public senior secondary schools, as recorded by the Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board (2026). A sample of 400 teachers was selected through multistage sampling involving simple random and stratified sampling techniques across two senatorial districts, 10 Local Government Areas, and 20 schools, comprising 220 female and 180 male teachers. Data were collected using three instruments: Performance Appraisal Systems Scale (PASS), Recognition Practices Scale (RPS), and Teachers' Work Motivation Scale (TWMS),

comprising 28 substantive items measured on a four-point Likert scale. The instruments were validated by the researcher's supervisor and experts in Educational Management, Measurement and Evaluation, while Cronbach's alpha coefficients of 0.86, 0.83, and 0.82 were obtained for the three scales, respectively, following a pilot study involving 30 teachers in Bayelsa State. Of the 400 questionnaires administered, 391 were retrieved, while 382 were properly completed and used for analysis. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed to answer the research questions, while corresponding null hypotheses were tested using the z-test for Pearson's correlation coefficient at the 0.05 level of significance. The strength of relationships was interpreted using Elendu's (2010) classification of correlation coefficients, such as 0.00 – 0.25 = Very Weak Relationship, 0.26 – 0.50 = Weak Relationship, 0.51 – 0.75 = Strong Relationship, 0.76 – 1.00 = Very Strong Relationship.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Research Question 1: What is the correlation between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the Correlation between Classroom Observation and Teachers' Work Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variables	N		R	Decision
Classroom Observation	382		0.638	Strong Correlation
Teachers' Work Motivation	382			

Decision Rule: 0.00 – 0.25 = Very Weak, 0.26 – 0.50 = Weak, 0.51 – 0.75 = Strong, 0.76 – 1.00 = Very Strong.

To answer Research Question 1, the result presented on Table 1 shows a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient of r = 0.638, indicating a strong positive correlation between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The positive coefficient implies that improvements in classroom observation practices are associated with corresponding improvements in teachers' work motivation. In other words, where school administrators regularly observe classroom instruction in a supportive, objective and developmental manner, teachers are more likely to demonstrate greater enthusiasm, commitment, and willingness to perform their professional responsibilities effectively.

The obtained correlation coefficient falls within the decision interval of 0.51–0.75, which is interpreted as a strong correlation based on the adopted decision rule. This suggests that

classroom observation constitutes an important aspect of performance appraisal systems capable of enhancing teachers' work motivation. Although the relationship is substantial, it also indicates that teachers' work motivation is influenced by other organisational and personal factors not examined in this study. Hence, there is a strong correlation between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: What is the correlation between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) Showing the Correlation between Structured Feedback Mechanisms and Teachers' Work Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variables	N		R	Decision
Structured Feedback Mechanisms Teachers' Work Motivation	382 382		0.586	Strong Correlation

Decision Rule: 0.00 – 0.25 = Very Weak, 0.26 – 0.50 = Weak, 0.51 – 0.75 = Strong, 0.76 – 1.00 = Very Strong.

To answer Research Question 2, the result presented on Table 2 reveals a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient of r = 0.586, indicating a strong positive relationship between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The positive correlation coefficient signifies that as school administrators provide timely, constructive and well-organised feedback to teachers regarding their instructional practices and professional responsibilities, teachers' level of work motivation correspondingly improves. This suggests that teachers who receive regular feedback on their performance are more likely to remain committed to instructional effectiveness, professional growth and the achievement of school goals.

The correlation coefficient of 0.586 falls within the 0.51–0.75 decision interval, which is interpreted as a strong relationship according to the adopted decision rule. This finding implies that structured feedback mechanisms are an important component of effective school supervision, as they encourage teachers to recognise their strengths, address identified weaknesses and sustain improved job performance. Nevertheless, the result also indicates that teachers' work motivation is not solely dependent on structured feedback mechanisms, as other organisational, professional and individual factors may also contribute significantly to

their motivation. Hence, there is a strong correlation between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question 3: What is the correlation between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the Correlation between Commendation Letters and Teachers' Work Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variables	N		R	Decision
Commendation Letters Teachers' Work Motivation	382 382		0.467	Weak Correlation

Decision Rule: 0.00 – 0.25 = Very Weak, 0.26 – 0.50 = Weak, 0.51 – 0.75 = Strong, 0.76 – 1.00 = Very Strong.

To answer Research Question 5, the result on Table 3 shows a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient of r = 0.467, indicating a weak positive correlation between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This suggests that the issuance of commendation letters is positively associated with teachers' work motivation, although the strength of the relationship is relatively low. Since the obtained correlation coefficient falls within the 0.26 - 0.50 decision interval, the relationship is interpreted as weak based on the adopted decision rule. This implies that while commendation letters may have contributed relatively little to motivating teachers, other factors are likely to exert a greater influence on their overall work motivation.

Hence, there is a weak correlation between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Research Question 4: What is the correlation between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 4: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the Correlation between Awards for Outstanding Performance and Teachers' Work Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variables	n		r	Decision
Awards for Outstanding Performance Teachers' Work Motivation	382 382		0.411	Weak Correlation

Decision Rule: 0.00 – 0.25 = Very Weak, 0.26 – 0.50 = Weak, 0.51 – 0.75 = Strong, 0.76 – 1.00 = Very Strong.

To answer Research Question 6, the result on Table 4 shows a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient of r = 0.411, indicating a weak positive relationship between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This implies that recognising teachers with awards for exceptional performance is associated with lower levels of work motivation.

Since the obtained correlation coefficient falls within the 0.26–0.50 decision interval, the relationship is interpreted as weak based on the adopted decision rule. This suggests that recognising and rewarding outstanding performance may not have been fully adopted to serve as a recognition practice capable of encouraging teachers to remain committed to their duties and improve their instructional performance. Hence, there is a weak correlation between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (Ho_1): There is no significant correlation between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 5: T-Test for Pearson (r) on the Correlation between Classroom Observation and Teachers' Work Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variables	N	df	r	p-value	Alpha Level	Decision
Classroom Observation Teachers' Work Motivation	382 382	380	0.638	0.000	0.05	Reject Ho_1 (Significant)

For Hypothesis 1, Table 5 revealed the result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis on the relationship between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The result indicated a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.638, with a sample size of 382 and 380 degrees of freedom. This coefficient revealed a strong positive relationship between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation. The p-value of 0.000, which is less than the 0.05 level of significance, indicated that the relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State, was rejected. This finding implies that effective classroom observation is associated with higher levels of teachers' work motivation.

Therefore, there is a significant correlation between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2 (Ho_2): There is no significant correlation between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 6: t-test for Pearson (r) on the Correlation between Structured Feedback Mechanisms and Teachers' Work Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variables	n	df	r	p-value	Alpha Level	Decision
Structured Feedback Mechanisms Teachers' Work Motivation	382 382	380	0.586	0.003	0.05	Reject Ho_2 (Significant)

For Hypothesis 2, Table 6 presented the result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis on the relationship between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The result indicated a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.586, with a sample size of 382 and 380 degrees of freedom. This coefficient revealed a strong positive relationship between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation. The p-value of 0.003 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State, was rejected. This finding implies that effective structured feedback mechanisms are associated with higher levels of teachers' work motivation.

Therefore, there is a significant correlation between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3 (Ho_3): There is no significant correlation between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 7: t-test for Pearson (r) on the Correlation between Commendation Letters and Teachers' Work Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variables	n	df	r	p-value	Alpha Level	Decision
Commendation Letters Teachers' Work Motivation	382 382	380	0.467	0.011	0.05	Reject Ho_3 (Significant)

For Hypothesis 3, Table 7 revealed the result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis on the relationship between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The result indicated a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.467, with a sample size of 382 and 380 degrees of freedom. This coefficient revealed a weak positive relationship between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation. The p-value of 0.011 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State, is rejected. This finding implies that the recognition of teachers' contributions through commendation letters is associated with higher levels of work motivation.

Therefore, there is a significant correlation between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Hypothesis 4 (Ho_4): There is no significant correlation between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 8: t-test for Pearson (r) on the Correlation between Awards for Outstanding Performance and Teachers' Work Motivation in Public Secondary Schools in Rivers State.

Variables	N	df	R	p-value	Alpha Level	Decision
Awards for Outstanding Performance Teachers' Work Motivation	382 382	380	0.411	0.027	0.05	Reject Ho_4 (Significant)

For Hypothesis 4, Table 8 revealed the result of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis on the relationship between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. The result indicated a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.411, with a sample size of 382 and 380 degrees of freedom. This coefficient revealed a weak positive relationship between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation. The p-value of 0.027 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, indicating that the relationship is statistically significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State, is rejected. This finding implies that recognising teachers' exceptional contributions through awards is associated with higher levels of work motivation.

Thus, there is a significant correlation between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS/IMPLICATIONS

The first finding revealed a strong and significant correlation between classroom observation and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This finding agrees with Bajec (2024), Hou et al. (2024), and Brandmiller et al. (2023), who reported that supportive classroom observation enhances teachers' motivation and instructional practices. The implication is that constructive classroom observation can improve teachers' professional confidence, commitment, instructional delivery, and students' learning outcomes. However, when perceived as a fault-finding exercise, it may discourage teachers and reduce their motivation.

The second finding revealed a strong and significant correlation between structured feedback mechanisms and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This finding is consistent with Kraft and Gilmour (2024), Burgess et al. (2023), and Allen et al. (2022), who highlighted the importance of constructive and timely feedback in promoting teachers' motivation and professional growth. The implication is that clear, timely, and actionable feedback can strengthen teachers' confidence, commitment, and instructional effectiveness. Conversely, delayed, unclear, or fault-finding feedback may discourage teachers, weaken their commitment to professional development, and negatively affect instructional quality.

The third finding revealed a weak but significant correlation between commendation letters and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This finding agrees with Ezeani and Okafor (2024) and Zhang and Li (2024), who reported that commendation letters positively influence teachers' motivation, although the present study found a weaker relationship. The implication is that timely, sincere, and deserved commendation letters can improve teachers' morale, sense of recognition, and commitment. However, their influence may be limited when used in isolation, making it necessary to combine them with other recognition practices to sustain teachers' motivation and instructional effectiveness.

The fourth finding revealed a weak but significant correlation between awards for outstanding performance and teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State. This finding partially agrees with Akinwale and Ojo (2024) and Hanushek et al. (2021), who reported that performance-based awards enhance teachers' motivation, although the

present study established a weaker relationship. The implication is that awards can encourage teachers' commitment and professional excellence when based on transparent and fair criteria. However, perceived bias or inconsistent recognition may limit their motivational influence, highlighting the need for equitable award systems alongside other teacher recognition practices.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that performance appraisal systems and recognition practices are significant correlates of teachers' work motivation in public secondary schools in Rivers State, considering that classroom observation, structured feedback mechanisms, commendation letters, and awards for outstanding performance all demonstrated positive correlations with teachers' work motivation.

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