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INCENTIVE REWARDS SYSTEM AS A MOTIVATOR FOR JOB RETENTION AMONG PROFESSIONALS IN SELECTED UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated reward systems as an incentive to motivate professionals for job retention within university libraries in Kwara State. The research explores various types of reward systems, including monetary and non-monetary incentives, and their effectiveness in motivating professionals. Survey research design was used for the study. The population covers professionals employed of Kwara State University Library, University of Ilorin Library and Al-Hikmah University Library. Questionnaire as the main instrument used for the study went through a validation process, incorporating both content and construct validation. Furthermore, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a value of 0.70. Out of the 52 copies administered, 47 were returned (90 %) and were found valid and usable for analysis in the study. Descriptive statistics such as simple frequency and percentages for the analysis of the data collected was used. The findings reveal professionals were indifferent as to whether they would probably look for a new job in the nearest next years and this potentially gives room for concerns. To address challenges and improve retention, it is important for institutions to enhance career growth opportunities, acknowledge achievements through recognition, and foster a supportive work environment for the purpose of retaining the current jobs of the professionals in the university libraries.

Keywords: Incentives, Reward systems, Motivation, Job retention, Turnover, Professionals

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the significance of factors such as reward systems, employee motivation, and job retention in shaping organisational performance and staff well-being in academic institutions (Kisang, 2023; Asafa & ONajite, 2025). Reward systems refer to the structured frameworks and mechanisms implemented by organisations to recognise and incentivize employee performance and contributions. These systems may include monetary rewards such as salary increases, bonuses, or profit-sharing, as well as non-monetary rewards such as recognition, promotion opportunities, and tangible benefits like flexible work arrangements or professional development opportunities (Muogbo & Jacob, 2018).

Reward systems play a crucial role in motivating and retaining library professionals within academic institutions. These professionals, including librarians, archivists, and library assistants, are essential for managing information resources, providing research assistance, and supporting the academic community's needs (Nwokocha, 2016). Implementing effective reward systems tailored to the unique context of library professionals can therefore contribute to their job satisfaction, engagement, and retention. While career advancement opportunities sustain long-term commitment and performance in educational institutions, offering well-structured compensation and recognition systems significantly boost employee motivation, engagement, and productivity (Sejal & Bhavikatti, 2024),

Employee motivation is the internal drive and willingness of individuals within the organisation to exert effort, achieve goals, and perform tasks effectively. It includes both intrinsic factors, such as personal satisfaction and fulfillment derived from the work itself, and extrinsic factors, including rewards, recognition, and opportunities for advancement (Badura, 2020). For library professionals, intrinsic motivators may include the opportunity to contribute to knowledge dissemination, engage with diverse information resources, and facilitate research and learning activities. Extrinsic motivators may include reciprocal benefits such as allowances, recognition, and opportunities for growth and promotions. These motivators can boost employee's morale and fuel their passion for their roles, and as a result, library professionals are more likely to remain committed, motivated, and dedicated to their job without any recourse to leaving their current organisation. This in return, boosts the retention rate of the organisation (Nyinyimbe, 2020). Hence, the organisation is able to retain its employees over time, thereby minimising turnover rates and maintaining a stable workforce (Admassie, 2019).

Organisational job retention as a factor influences an employee's decision to remain with the organisation, including job satisfaction, opportunities for career advancement, organisational culture, work-life balance, and compensation and benefits packages (Lee, Lim, Seo & Kwak, 2022). In the context of library professionals within universities, job retention is critical for maintaining organisational stability and ensuring the continuity of services essential for supporting teaching, learning, and research activities. Several factors influence library professionals' decision to remain with any institution. One key factor is job satisfaction, which encompasses various aspects of their work environment, including the nature of their tasks, the support received from colleagues and supervisors, and the alignment of their values with the organisation's mission and goals (Omokorede & Olufunke, 2017). Library professionals who derive satisfaction from their work are more likely to remain committed and engaged, reducing the likelihood of turnover. Opportunities for career advancement also play a significant role in job retention among library professionals. Clear pathways for professional growth, such as promotion opportunities and access to training and development programmes provide

employees with a sense of purpose and progression within their careers (Kumari, Barkat Ali, Un Nisa Khan, & Abbas, 2021).

Therefore, by investing in the professional development of its library staff, university libraries can enhance job satisfaction and retention rates, ensuring that employees feel valued and supported in their career aspirations. In university libraries, effective reward systems, encompassing monetary and non-monetary incentives, motivate employees and enhance job satisfaction. This motivation, driven by both intrinsic factors like passion for supporting academic endeavors and extrinsic factors like recognition and career advancement opportunities, leads to increased job retention (Francis, Zirra, & Charles, 2020). Similarly, motivated employees who feel valued are more likely to stay with the organisation, reinforcing the positive cycle of motivation and retention. By understanding and optimizing this relationship, library administrators can create a supportive environment that fosters motivation, satisfaction, and long-term retention among library professionals, ensuring the continued success of the university's library services (Admassie, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

Effective reward system is essential for enhancing staff morale and retention, which in turn promotes the mission of university libraries to support institutional goals. According to research (Adeleke & Olorunsola, 2020), both monetary and non-monetary reward systems have an important role in boosting job satisfaction and lowering turnover. However, university libraries in Nigeria, encounter considerable difficulties in retaining skill professionals owing to insufficient incentive systems (Ojo, 2019; Adeleke & Olorunsola, 2020; Igwe & Emezie, 2021). Preliminary investigations further revealed that professionals in university libraries in Kwara State face poor incentives, ranging from limited promotion opportunities, minimal involvement in decision making process, low pay especially to support staff and lack of reciprocal benefits such as receiving proper recognition for the expertise and services provided.

Seemingly, these are contributing factors to job dissatisfaction, which potentially may reduce the institutional capacity for high job retention rate among professionals and ultimately inhibit the libraries from fulfilling its articulated mandates to support the parent institutions. It is anticipated that if professionals do not feel engaged and a sense of growth in their job, and if their work is not appreciated, they will seek fulfillment elsewhere. Therefore, this study sets out to determine how present reward systems match with professionals' expectations, as well as the consequent retention intention. Findings will help to inform evidence-based methods for increasing institutional commitment to better motivate library professionals and, as a result, boost retention rates in university libraries in Kwara State.

Objectives of the Study

The main of objective of this study is to evaluate the reward systems, employee motivation and job retention among professionals in university libraries in Kwara State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. examine the existing monetary reward systems implemented in motivating professionals in university libraries in Kwara State;
ii. determine the recognition-based reward systems that motivates professionals in university libraries in Kwara State;
iii. evaluate the team-based reward systems that motivates professionals in the university libraries; and
iv. examine job retention intention among professionals in university libraries in Kwara State.

Review of Related Literature

This section review literature relevant to this study.

Reward Systems and motivation among Professionals in University Libraries

A reward system within an organisational context is a comprehensive framework designed to recognise and reinforce desired behaviours, achievements, and contributions of individuals or groups within the workforce. It encompasses a range of mechanisms and practices aimed at motivating employees, enhancing job satisfaction, and fostering a positive work environment (Mazllami, 2020). A well-designed reward system aligns with the organisation's goals, values, and culture while catering to the diverse needs and preferences of its employees. According to Koralege and Priyashantha (2019), reward is essentially anything that serves as reinforcement, whether it is intrinsic or extrinsic, bestowed upon an employee within a corporation for their services rendered or the outcomes of their work. A highly motivated employee can significantly contribute to an organisation's success, adding unique value and boosting profitability. Therefore, implementing effective reward incentives is crucial, serving as an incentive to drive overall organisational performance.

Studies by Madu *et al.* (2016) and Kefas (2024) on librarians in Nigerian federal university libraries demonstrated that both monetary and non-monetary incentives are accessible to librarians. Among these, monetary incentives such as salary, bonuses, salary advances, and loans were found to be the most preferred and impactful in motivating librarians. The monetary incentives stated by the respondents include salary, bonuses, salary advance, and loans, while non-monetary include promotion, staff welfare scheme, commendation letters, training, conferences, workshops and awards. Both monetary and non-monetary incentives provided to librarians enhanced motivation, work satisfaction, and increased organisational engagement. Employee motivation manifests in two primary forms: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation stems from internal attitudes and rewards, driving behaviours through factors such as achievement, responsibility, and personal growth (Catharina & Victoria, 2015). Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, arises from external factors within the work environment, such as rewards and recognition (Ghazi, Shahzada, & Khan, 2013). Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators play crucial roles in nurturing long-term relationships with employees and enhancing their output (Aizza *et al.*, 2018; Triswanto & Yunita, 2021). Thus, by nurturing employee motivation, organisations can harness the full potential of their workforce, even amidst challenging circumstances, thereby fostering continuous improvement and competitiveness (Badura *et al.*, 2020; Ali & Anwar, 2021).

Non-monetary Reward Systems and Motivation among Professionals in University Libraries

Financial rewards, including salaries, bonuses, and promotions, are powerful tools for maintaining motivation and driving performance, particularly in production-oriented industries where monetary gains can directly satisfy employees' needs. However, research suggests that while pay increase can initially drive diligence and commitment, its long-term impact on productivity diminishes without complementary non-monetary incentives (Neta & Haas, 2019). Non-monetary factors such as rewards, leadership, trust, recognition, and effective communication also play crucial roles in motivating employees and enhancing job satisfaction (Kisang, 2023; Asafa & ONajite, 2025). Many companies utilise a combination of pay, promotion opportunities, and other rewards to motivate employees and improve performance.

Outcome of a study by Imbahale (2016) at the Technical University of Kenya indicated that most employees sampled rated involvement in decision making and job autonomy high indicating that employees want the freedom to arrange their work and have it done in their own

ways. Omondi and Were (2023) equally revealed that employees in Kenyan public sector institutions placed a high value on job autonomy and decision-making involvement. Their findings indicated that majority of respondents strongly valued the freedom to organise their tasks independently, while most expressed displeasure with top-down managerial styles that limited their ability to influence workplace decisions. The study concluded that giving workers freedom and a voice significantly increased their sense of commitment and perceived job control.

A similar study by Asafa and ONajite (2025) which investigated motivation and Job performance of librarians in Nigerian public universities demonstrated a strong positive relationship between employee recognition, performance rewards, and job satisfaction, confirming that effective recognition and incentive systems are crucial for enhancing staff morale and engagement in academic library settings. Overall, by incorporating a balanced approach that considers both monetary and non-monetary incentives, organisations can create a supportive and motivating work environment conducive to employee engagement and performance.

Job Retention among Professionals in University Libraries

Job retention refers to the ability of an organisation to retain its employees over a period of time (Lee, Lim, Seo & Kwak, 2022). Job retention can also be seen as the capacity of an organisation to retain its workforce to minimise turnover rates and maintain a stable employment environment over time (Admassie, 2019). It encompasses the efforts and strategies employed by the organisation to cultivate a supportive workplace culture, provide opportunities for growth and development, and address employee needs and concerns. When employees feel valued and supported, they are more likely to stay with the company, contributing to a more cohesive and efficient workforce. According to Yang, Wan, and Fu (2012), five main factors influence turnover: company-related, compensation and promotion, personal emotion, the nature of the job or industry, and work content. Wilson (2016) also gave the causes of turnover or intention to resign to include job satisfaction, pay-promotion, supervisor, employee relationships, group dynamics, job content, and work environment.

Bakare (2025) in a study found a relatively employee low turnover rate in some Nigerian university libraries, indicating employee loyalty to their institutions. Okoye (2017) analysed the influence of reward system on job performance of librarians of academic libraries in South-East, Nigeria. Findings show that almost half of the librarians said that what they receive as pay does not encourage their retention. Therefore, the issue of rewarding employees using all possible types of rewards matters a lot and should never be neglected by management of the organisations, because deliberate ignorance of rewarding needs will lead to non-motivated, non-committed staff with poor performance and low retention (Salah, 2016).

Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study with the population comprising 52 library professionals across sections in University of Ilorin Library (32), Kwara State University Library (15) and Al-Hikmah University Library (5). The study used all the professionals as participants. The research instrument comprised of a well-structured questionnaire designed using a 5-point Likert scale rating. The scale included options ranging from "Strongly Agree" (5) to "Strongly Disagree" (1), with "Agree," "Undecided," and "Disagree" as intermediate choices. The questionnaire went through a validation process, incorporating both content and constructs validation. Furthermore, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a value of 0.70. This indicates

that the items within each section of the questionnaire reliably measure the same construct. Descriptive statistics using simple frequency and percentages was employed for the analysis of the data collected.

Return Rate

Out of the 52 copies administered, 47 were returned (90 %) and were found valid and usable for analysis in the study. The breakdown showed that 29(61.70%) were from UNILORIN, 14 from KWASU (29.79%) and 4(8.51%) from Al-Hikmah University. Sixteen (34.04%) of them were Acquisition Librarians, 14(29.79%) were Librarian I, 11(23.41%) were Librarian II and 3(6.38%) were Principal and Higher Library Offices respectively.

Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Existing Monetary Reward Systems Implemented in the University Libraries

Items	**SA F (%)**	**A F (%)**	**UD F (%)**	**D F (%)**	**SD F (%)**
Access to free medical service is available in my library/institution.	14(29.8)	18(38.3)	5(10.6)	7(14.9)	3(6.4)
Car benefit is extended to staff	2(4.3)	2(4.3)	6(12.8)	23(48.9)	14(29.8)
There is opportunity for housing benefit	2(4.3)	3(6.4)	4(8.5)	19(40.4)	19(40.4)
Annual bonus and other financial incentives are given to motivate professionals in my library/institution	3(6.4)	4(8.5)	4(8.5)	21(44.7)	15(31.9)
My library or institution provides grant to purchase work tools such as computer, software etc.	1(2.1)	4(8.5)	3(6.4)	13(27.7)	26(55.3)
Sponsored training, conferences seminars and further education are supported by mylibrary/institution	11(23.4)	23(48.9)	1(2.1)	5(10.6)	7(14.9)

I am satisfied with my current monthly salary	9(19.1)	5(10.6)	1(2.1)	21(44.7)	11(23.4)
There is paid leave benefit	10(21.3)	15(31.9)	7(14.9)	9(19.1)	6(12.8)
My library/university facilitates access to credit loan	10(21.3)	9(19.1)	15(31.9)	7(14.9)	6(12.8)

Field Survey, 2024

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents 26(55.3%) strongly disagreed that their libraries or institutions provides grant to purchase work tools such as computer, software etc. Although, sponsored training, conferences seminars and further education were agreed upon by the majority of the respondents 23(48.9%) as a form of monetary reward system to support them, the same number of respondents simply disagreed that car benefit was extended to them. This was significantly followed by 21(44.7%) respondents who equally disagreed they were satisfied with their current monthly salary and rewarded with annual bonus and other financial incentives in their libraries or institutions.

Table 2: Recognition-based Reward System Motivating the Professionals

Items	**SA f(%)**	**A f(%)**	**UD f(%)**	**D f(%)**	**SD f(%)**
I feel that my work is valued and appreciated	22(46.8)	11(23.4)	1(2.1)	7(14.9)	6(12.8)
Formal recognition for efforts is done in my library	17(36.2)	6(12.8)	5(10.6)	9(19.1)	10(21.3)
There is possibility to achieve rapid promotion	9(19.1)	5(10.6)	2(4.3)	17(36.2)	14(29.8)
In the past year, I was given ample opportunities to grow	13(27.7)	12(25.5)	5(10.6)	10(21.3)	7(14.9)
My opinions are taken into account at work	17(36.2)	12(25.5)	11(23.4)	4(8.5)	3(6.4)
My superior cares about me as a person.	19(40.4)	13(27.7)	7(14.9)	4(8.5)	4(8.5)

Field Survey, 2024

Data on Table 2 shows that a significant majority 22(46.8%) expressed the view that their work is valued and appreciated. This was closely followed by 19(40.4) who strongly agreed that their superiors care about them, 17(36.2%) who expressed strong opinion that their efforts and

contributing opinions in the library are formally recognised and taken into consideration respectively. In contrast, majority of the respondents 14(29.8%) strongly expressed doubt as to whether there is possibility to achieve rapid promotion in their place of work.

Table 3: Team-based Reward System Motivating the Professionals

Items	**SA F (%)**	**A F (%)**	**UD F (%)**	**D F (%)**	**SD F (%)**
Receiving recognition for team accomplishment.	18(38.3)	15(31.9)	2(4.3)	5(10.6)	7(14.9)
There is feeling of a spirit of teamwork and cooperation among co-workers in my library.	13(26.5)	19(38.8)	2(4.1)	8(16.3)	7(14.3)
There is independence and freedom to influence work content and methods	5(10.6)	7(14.9)	7(14.9)	21(44.7)	7(14.9)
I am allowed to participate in decision-making process	4(8.5)	7(14.9)	6(12.8)	19(40.4)	11(23.4)
My library/university recognises individual team members for their efforts on equal basis.	14(29.8)	7(14.9)	3(6.4)	11(23.4)	12(25.5)

Field Survey, 2024

The analysis of team-based reward systems in university libraries in Table 3 reveals that majority 21(44.7%) disagreed there is independence and freedom to influence work content and methods closely followed by 19(40.4) respondents who equally disagreed they are allowed to participate in decision-making process. In a similar manner, some majority 19(38.8%) simply agreed they felt a spirit of teamwork and cooperation among co-workers in their libraries, 18(38.3%) respondents strongly agreed they received recognition for team accomplishment.

Table 4: *Job Retention Intention among the Respondents*

Items	**SA f(%)**	**A f(%)**	**UD f(%)**	**D f(%)**	**SD f(%)**
I foresee a future for myself within this institution.	21(44.7)	13(27.7)	2(4.3)	4(8.5)	7(14.9)
I will likely actively look for a new job in the next year.	5(10.6)	15(31.9)	3(6.4)	7(14.9)	17(36.2)
I often think about quitting.	4(8.5)	8(17)	8(17)	13(27.7)	14(29.8)
I probably look for a new job in the nearest next years.	3(6.4)	7(14.9)	16(34)	13(27.7)	8(17)
If I had the chance, I would take a different job within this institution.	14(29.8)	13(27.7)	8(17)	4(8.5)	8(17)
I see myself working here in the next five years.	11(23.4)	15(31.9)	8(17)	4(8.5)	9(19.1)

Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 reveals an overwhelming agreement by most respondents 21(44.7%) indicating a foreseeable future for them in their libraries or institutions. A majority 14(29.8%) also indicated in their opinion that given a chance, they would take a different job within their institutions. Similarly, majority of the respondents 17(36.2), by their expression, were strongly not in terms with looking for a new job in the next year. However, majority of the respondents 16(34%) were undecided as to whether they would probably look for a new job in the nearest next years.

Discussion of the Findings

Majority of respondents agreed that they were supported with grants for training, conferences, seminars and further education as a form of monetary reward system. However, most of the respondents claimed they were not provided with car benefits and grants to purchase needed work tools. Majority of the respondents also expressed they were not satisfied with their current monthly salary, annual bonus and other financial incentives in their libraries or institutions. This finding is inconsistent with the study of Kefas (2024), whose findings demonstrated that both monetary and non-monetary incentives are accessible to librarians with monetary incentives such salary, bonuses, salary advance, and loans, being the most preferred and impactful incentives in motivating them.

Findings revealed that the respondents acknowledge that their work is valued and appreciated, that their superiors care about them, and that their efforts and contributing opinions in the library are formally recognised and taken into consideration respectively. The outcome of a study by Asafa and ONajite (2025) which investigated motivation and Job performance of librarians in Nigerian public universities demonstrated a strong positive relationship between employee recognition, performance rewards, and job satisfaction, confirming that effective recognition and incentive systems are crucial for enhancing staff morale and engagement in academic library settings.

In contrast to the acknowledgement of recognition, majority of the respondents strongly expressed doubt as to whether there is possibility of achieving rapid promotion in their place of work. Wan, and Fu (2012) and Wilson (2016) in previous studies identified compensation and promotion as the main causes of turnover or intention to resign in institutions they studied. Findings indicated that respondents were denied independence and freedom to influence work content and methods and were disallowed to participate in decision-making process. Consequently, majority felt a spirit of teamwork and cooperation among co-workers in their libraries. Similarly, Omondi and Were (2023) equally revealed that employees in Kenyan public sector institutions placed a high value on job autonomy and decision-making involvement. However, majority of respondents expressed displeasure with top-down managerial styles that limited their ability to influence workplace decisions.

Findings revealed an overwhelming agreement indicating a foreseeable future for respondents in their libraries or institutions. Given a chance, there was evidence from the findings that they would take a different job within their institutions. Therefore, respondents by their expression were strongly not in terms with looking for a new job in the next year. This finding is like a previous study by Bakare (2025) which found a relatively employee low turnover rate in some Nigerian university libraries, indicating employee loyalty to their institutions. However, that majority of the respondents were undecided as to whether they would probably look for a new job in the nearest next year, which gives room for concern.

Conclusion

Library professionals acknowledged that they were supported with monetary incentives such as grants for training, conferences, seminars and further education, however, dissatisfaction still persists with current pay, annual bonuses, and other financial reward such as car benefit in their libraries or institutions. This suggests partial monetary reward, an inadequacy that may undermine long-term retention efforts. Regardless of recognition of non-monetary rewards such as appreciation and formal recognition of their efforts and contributing opinions by their superiors, uncertainties about possibility to achieve rapid promotion in their place of work remain a big concern. Additional demotivators included a lack of freedom to influence job content and the inability to participate in decision-making processes, both of which indicate gaps in career growth chances. This probably explains why coworkers in libraries reported a low sense of teamwork.

It is obvious from the findings that professionals envisioned a foreseeable future for themselves in their libraries or institutions and that given a chance, they would take a different job within their institutions. This portrays an underlying discontent. Therefore, by addressing all the identified deficiencies, the studied institutions can build a more motivating work environment that not only retains skilled professionals but also cultivates their long-term commitment and productivity.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

1. Since there was strong evidence that employee opinions are consistently valued, university libraries should complement this by implementing more consistent and transparent formal recognition programmes and enhance career advancement opportunities to address dissatisfaction with rapid promotions.
2. The Library management should design programme to increase employee autonomy and participation in decision-making to address the significant dissatisfaction with team accomplishment, leading to greater motivation and job satisfaction.
3. Likewise, ensuring fair and consistent recognition of individual contributions within teams can also improve perceptions of equity and recognition, fostering a more supportive and motivating work environment.
4. The University authority should incorporate a comprehensive incentive structure that combines monetary rewards with non-monetary motivators such as career advancement pathways, participative leadership, and more job autonomy to improve retention.

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