Original Research Article

Assessing the Relationship between Salaries and Nurses' Performance in Selected Teaching Hospitals in the South-South, Nigeria

Onita A[1], Gbaranor B. K[2]*, Ohaka J[3], Robinson-Bassey G. C[1]

[1]Department of Nursing Sciences, College of Medical Sciences, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

[2]Department of Human Physiology, College of Medical Sciences, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

[3]Department of Accountancy, Faculty of Administration and Management, Rivers State University, Rivers State, South-South, Nigeria

***Corresponding Author:** Gbaranor, K. B

Department of Human Physiology, College of Medical Sciences, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Abstract: Nurses are core to healthcare delivery impacting patient outcomes, safety, satisfaction, and operational efficiency. Teaching hospitals, often with complex patient cases and educational missions, place unique demands on nursing staff. Understanding how salary levels affect nurse performance is important for workforce planning, retention strategies, and quality care. This study aimed in Assessing the Relationship between Salaries and Nurses' Performance in Selected Teaching Hospitals in The South-South, Nigeria. A cross-sectional design involving 1210 nurses (females (962) and males (248)) was adopted for this study and the study's population consists of all the nurses in 6 selected teaching hospitals who are still in service across the South-South Zone. A well-structured questionnaire was given to each participant to fill and return to the research assistant. The results shows that 79.5% of the nurses were females, 20.5% were males, 61.6% have first degree, 22.6% have postgraduate degree, 15.9 have other relevant certificates, 26% have served 5 years and less, 18.8% 6years, 33.1% 11 to 15 years, 8.1% 16 to 20 years 8.1%, and above 20 years of service 14%. The result shows that 443(36.6%) agreed and 216(17.9%) strongly agreed that wages are paid on time, 105(8.7%) agreed strongly and 53% of the nurse's disagreed that wages are not competitive, 804(66.3%) of the participants agreed and confirm wages are consistently paid monthly, 62.9% disagreed that their wages do not reflect their skill level. The findings suggest that while the hospital may have a solid administrative structure for payroll timing and consistency, there's considerable dissatisfaction with wage levels and their alignment with the nurses' skills and responsibilities.

Keywords: Assessing, Relationship, Salaries, Nurses, Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Siwale *et al*., (2020) investigated the impact of a reward system on organisational performance at Brentwood Suppliers Limited in Lusaka, Zambia. The study's goals were to ascertain whether there was a connection between an organisation's reward system and better employee performance, assess the effectiveness of the current system, and look into how incentive systems affect employee performance. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis were used to analyse the data. The findings demonstrated that employee performance and incentive programs were related, indicating that Brentwood suppliers' present strategy was inefficient and required modification. Obiaga and Itakpe (2021) looked on how employees' productivity was impacted by the Nigerian hotel industry's reward system. The study's specific objectives are to assess the effect of significant pay and salary reward systems on workers' quality of service performance and to ascertain the influence of pertinent benefits incentive systems on employee commitment in Nigeria's healthcare sector. The research design was a descriptive survey, and the study area was Enugu State, Nigeria. A sample size of 378 respondents was chosen from the target population of 503 using the Taro formula. The study issue was addressed using simple

percentages, means, and deviations, and the results were presented using tables and simple percentages. By comparing the student-t statistic, regression analysis was utilised to assess the hypotheses. The study found that large wage and salary compensation systems significantly affect the quality of services rendered by workers in the hospitality sector (t-statistic (8.312)>P-value (0.008). Additionally, employee engagement in the hospitality sector—especially at Nike Lake Resort Hotel Enuge State—is greatly impacted by retirement benefits reward programs. Nike's management should ensure that staff receive regular promotions when they are due, according to the report. This would encourage workers to put in their best effort at work, which would boost the hospitality industry's performance. The importance of nurses' empowerment and recognition in connection to their job satisfaction at KFSH-D was investigated in a study by Ahmari *et al.*, (2023). The study employed a quantitative research methodology and a descriptive-analytical strategy. A survey was used to gather data from registered nurses at King Fahad Specialist Hospital-Dammam (KFSH-D) about how structural empowerment and nurses' recognition programs affected their job satisfaction. Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the respondents' personal traits after the data was gathered, while inferential statistics were used to determine the statistical relationship between the independent variable job satisfaction and the structural empowerment and nurses' recognition program among the registered nurses at KFSH-D as dependent variables. Kabeel & Mosa (2017) looked into the relationship between job satisfaction and the professional identities of psychiatric nurses. A descriptive correlation research approach was employed for the investigation. The research questions for the study were as follows: (a) How do mental nurses identify professionally? (a) What level of job satisfaction do psychiatric nurses have? (c) What is the relationship between psychiatric nurses' perceptions of their professional identities and job satisfaction? The investigation was conducted at the Abbassya Mental Health Hospital in Egypt. A convenient sample of fifty nurses was used for the evaluation. Tool 1: The nurses' age, sex, position, years of experience, and level of education were all included on the background data sheet. assessment 2: To gauge the level of a nurse's professional identity, Kabeel developed and validated the professional identity assessment for nurses. Tool 3: The Mueller and McCloskey Satisfaction Scale developed by Ellenbecker and collaborators. The results showed a favourable and significant correlation between nurses' professional identities and job satisfaction. The authors conclude that professional identity has an impact on job happiness. According to Muthmainnah *et al.*, (2018), compensation enhances nurses' performance. 25 publications from the Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), MEDLINE, EMBASE, PsycINFO, and Global Health databases were analysed as part of this study's literature review methodology. Only English-language publications from August 2006 to August 2015 were included in the literature. The study's findings show that better compensation schemes have a positive impact on nurses' performance and, consequently, the calibre of healthcare services. Nurses' motivation, productivity, satisfaction, and even retention may all increase with a well-managed compensation scheme. However, due to high turnover rates, low compensation and poor management result in a shortage of nurses. The study concludes that sufficient pay has been shown to improve nurses' performance and, thus, increase the bar for healthcare. The scientific information in this literature review can be used by decision-makers to encourage the implementation of pay plans that include career ladders, credentialing, and re-credentialing. It is advised that future studies investigate the development of efficient nursing pay plans. Muchai *et al.*, (2018) conducted a study to ascertain the effect of compensation systems on organisational performance in public organisations with reference to the Teachers Service Commission. The study specifically examined the impact of personnel turnover on the organisational performance of the Teachers Service Commission. With a sample size of 316 respondents and a target demographic of 1,500 workers at the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) headquarters in Nairobi, the study employed a descriptive research methodology. The study's findings so showed that organisational performance was impacted by employee turnover. The study discovered that employees' commitment, favourable working circumstances, frequent reviews of reward systems, and high levels of job satisfaction and motivation all had an impact on the organisation's performance. The study concluded that employee turnover was one of the ways that compensation systems impacted organisational effectiveness in public organisations. The study suggested that the management of the company examine and raise employee compensation and perks. Every employee should have access to a good working environment and appropriate working circumstances. The impact of the Contributory Pensions Scheme on Employee Performance was evaluated by Eze & Anikeze (2018). The specific goals were to ascertain how much the Contributory Pension Scheme has improved employees' attitudes towards work, how it has assisted in attracting and retaining qualified workers, and how the Contributory Pension Scheme has affected employees' morale and satisfaction. Co-relational and cross-sectional survey research designs were employed in this study. Six thousand eight hundred fifty (6850) employees of five Federal Universities in South East Nigeria make up the study's population. The Taro Yamane statistical formula was used to calculate the sample size. The T-test statistical test was used to test the data collected from the respondents using a structured questionnaire. According to the report, the Contributory Pension Scheme has improved employees' attitudes towards their jobs. In addition to helping to draw in and keep skilled individuals, the Contributory Pension Scheme has also improved employee satisfaction and morale. Among other things, this report suggested that Nigerian universities, particularly State and Private universities, make sure the Pensions Reform Act of 2004 is properly implemented and strictly adhered to. At the Catholic University of Eastern Africa in Kenya, Kawara (2021) carried out a study to look at how reward systems affected worker productivity. The study's particular goals were to identify the elements that boost workers' incentive to perform better and to critically assess and concentrate on how reward systems affect worker productivity. Eighty respondents from all staff cadres were sampled using purposeful sampling. Self-administered questionnaires were used to gather data. The data was analyzed using the regression approach. The study's findings demonstrated that, although

respondents' motivational preferences varied, most employees of the organisation were more exposed to the use of non-monetary rewards, such as training, recognition, opportunities to assume greater responsibility, employee promotion, and involvement in critical decision-making and challenging tasks, to encourage exemplary performers. Additionally, the study highlights the importance and worth of the rewards offered for exceptional achievement. The results of the study indicate that employee reward programs are a source of motivation for employees. This study suggests that managers should ensure that prizes satisfy the needs of their employees. In order to determine how organisational and demographic factors affect hotel employees' contextual and task performance, Namrita & Bhawana (2019) conducted a study. A sample of 350 hotel employees provided design, methodology, and approach data. A systematic questionnaire and primary data served as the foundation for the study. Results indicate that while employees' task performance rises with age, their contextual performance only improves until they are 40–50 years old, after which it stays constant. Employee performance was impacted by low pay and job uncertainty. The employees' performance was not improved by a change of designation alone, without a commensurate pay boost. Job performance is greatly impacted by the kind and size of the organisation.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

A cross-sectional design involving 1210 nurses (females (962) and males (248)) was adopted for this study and the study's population consists of all the nurses in 6 selected teaching hospitals who are still in service across the South-South Zone. A well-structured questionnaire was given to each participant to fill and return to the research assistant. The gathered data was entered into a spreadsheet, and SPSS Version 23 was used for analysis. The study issues were addressed using the descriptive statistics of frequency, percentages, means, and standard deviation, and the hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance using the inferential statistics of Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis.

RESULT

The results shows that 79.5% of the nurses were females, 20.5% were males, 61.6% have first degree, 22.6% have postgraduate degree, 15.9 have other relevant certificates, 26% have served 5 years and less, 18.8% 6years, 33.1% 11 to 15 years, 8.1% 16 to 20 years 8.1%, and above 20 years of service 14% (Table 1). The result shows that 443(36.6%) agreed and 216(17.9%) strongly agreed that wages are paid on time, 105(8.7%) agreed strongly and 53% of the nurse's disagreed that wages are not competitive, 804(66.3%) of the participants agreed and confirm wages are consistently paid monthly, 62.9% disagreed that their wages do not reflect their skill level (Table 2).

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Data of Respondent on Reward System and Nurses Performance

Variables	Frequency (n=1210)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	248	20.5
Female	962	79.5
Qualification		
First Degree	745	61.6
Post-Graduate Degree	273	22.6
Others	192	15.9
Years in service		
5 years or less	314	26.0
6 years	228	18.8
11 – 15 years	401	33.1
16 – 20 years	98	8.1
Above 20 years	169	14.0
Rank		
NOII	326	26.9
NOI	192	15.9
SNO	284	23.5
PNO	165	13.6
ACNO	72	6.0
CNO	90	7.4
ADNS	36	3.0
DD	45	3.7

Table 2: Responses of Nurses on Salaries Payment in the Study

S/N	Items	SD	D	U	A	SA	Sum	Mean	SD
1	Nurses are paid their wages on time in this hospital.	240	226	85	443	216	1210	3.11	1.46
		19.8%	18.6%	7.1%	36.6%	17.9%	100%		
2	Nurses' wages in this hospital could be considered as competitive.	278	350	179	295	105	1207	2.63	1.33
		23.0%	30.0%	14.8%	24.4%	8.7%	100%		
3	Nurses' wages are consistently paid every month in this hospital	127	169	110	538	266	1210	3.50	1.31
		10.5%	14.0%	9.2%	44.3%	22.0%	100%		
4	Nurses' wages may be considered as commensurate with their skills in this hospital	477	289	113	228	103	1210	2.29	1.40
		39.1%	23.8%	9.4%	18.9%	8.6%	100%		

$$SA=5, A=4, U=3, D=2, SD=1= \frac{15}{5} = 3.0$$

Mean of 3.0 is Agreed while mean of <3.0 is Disagree

DISCUSSION

Nurses are core to healthcare delivery impacting patient outcomes, safety, satisfaction, and operational efficiency. Teaching hospitals, often with complex patient cases and educational missions, place unique demands on nursing staff. Understanding how salary levels affect nurse performance is important for workforce planning, retention strategies, and quality care. Salary alone does not fully determine performance, but it is an important predictor. Pay influences motivation, retention, satisfaction, which in turn shape performance. In teaching hospitals, workload and additional academic responsibilities can dilute salary effects if not paired with supportive policies (e.g., professional development, mentorship).

The study revealed that the descriptive statistics on responses obtained from the survey on items relating to salaries of nurses in the teaching hospitals situated within the South-South region of Nigeria. Item 1 indicate that 545% of the participants agree with the mean values of (3.11 ±1.46) and reported that wages are enquired the timely payment of wages due to nurses. The result shows that 443(36.6%) agreed and 216(17.9%) strongly agreed that wages are paid on time. However, a significant minority of 466(38.4%) disagreed. Meanwhile, the mean of 3.11 suggests a neutral to slightly positive perception. The implication of this pattern of response is that; While most nurses lean toward acknowledging timely payments, there is enough variability (SD = 1.46) to indicate inconsistencies or distrust in payroll practices. On the second item which enquired if wage paid to the nurses are competitive of 628(53%). 53% of the nurse's disagreed with the mean value of (2.63±1.33) do not consider wages competitive. Only 105(8.7%) agreed strongly. Also, the mean is well below neutral, implying low confidence in wage competitiveness. The implication of this result is that; nurses may feel their salaries do not match industry standards or expectations, which could impact morale, retention, and job satisfaction.

The third item enquired the consistency of the monthly payments. The result shows a healthy majority of 804(66.3%) of the participants agreed with mean value of (3.50±1.31) and confirm wages are consistently paid monthly. Also, the mean of 3.50 reflects a positive perception, despite some variation. The implication of this is that; it creates a strong point for the institution because consistency matters even if competitiveness is lacking. Regular pay helps reduce stress and improve trust. The fourth item enquired if wages commensurate with skills; a heavy 766(62.9%). 62.9% of the respondents disagreed with the mean value of (2.29±1.40) feel their wages do not reflect their skill level. Similarly, the low mean value of 2.29 indicates dissatisfaction and perceived undervaluation. This implies that there is a disconnect between compensation and qualifications. If left unaddressed, it could affect professional engagement and push skilled nurses to seek alternatives. Overall reliability in monthly payment is a plus (Item 3). Value perception and competitiveness of wages are weak areas (Items 2 & 4). Timeliness of payment is moderately supported but mixed (Item 1). These findings suggest that while the hospital may have a solid administrative structure for payroll timing and consistency, there's considerable dissatisfaction with wage levels and their alignment with the nurses' skills and responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

There is a meaningful relationship between salary and nurses' performance in teaching hospitals, but it's part of a broader ecosystem of motivation, work environment, and professional support. Optimizing nurse pay must be accompanied by strategies that enhance work conditions and professional growth to achieve sustained performance gains.

The study revealed that, there is a disconnect between compensation and qualifications. If left unaddressed, it could affect professional engagement and push skilled nurses to seek alternatives. Higher salaries often correlate with higher job satisfaction, which relates to better care, lower absenteeism, and reduced errors. Better salaries reduce external job searching and distraction, focusing nurses on current roles. Fair compensation can increase motivation, professionalism, and willingness to go above and beyond duties.

These findings suggest that while the hospital may have a solid administrative structure for payroll timing and consistency, there's considerable dissatisfaction with wage levels and their alignment with the nurses' skills and responsibilities.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty of Basic Medical Science Ethical and Research Committee (RSU/FBMS/REC/24/079). A letter of introduction was obtained from the Department of Nursing Science, Faculty of Basic Medical Science, Rivers State University to the Health and Research Ethics Committee of the various hospitals. Ethical Approval was granted.

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