

## Drivers and Challenges of Motivation for Casual Workers on Construction Sites

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### Abstract

*Motivation is the set of processes that determine the choices people make about their behaviours. Implementing a well formulated motivation policy triggers the innate qualities of labourers (employees) by enhancing their productivity. This study investigates the drivers of motivation for casual workers on the construction sites by identifying the factors responsible for motivation and challenges to the motivation of casual workers in Nigerian construction industry. Relevant literature were reviewed and 18-point evaluation questionnaire was developed on the drivers of motivation while 11 were collated for the challenges of motivation for casual workers on construction site. The questionnaires were then distributed to the professionals and labourers within construction sites in Lagos state, Nigeria. The data collected were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study indicates that casual workers give in their best when there are provisions of reward for the good work and excellence, also when they are adequately provided with working equipments and facilities and that there is no significant difference in the perception of labourers and professionals on the drivers and challenges of motivation for casual workers on construction sites*

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**Keywords:** motivation, construction sites, drivers, reward, casual workers

### INTRODUCTION

Site workers (labourers) account for up to forty per cent of the direct capital cost of large construction projects (Yisa, Holt, and Zakeri, 2000). There is a need to maximize the productivity of labour resources to improve performance in the construction work as observed by Ng, Skitmore, Lam and Poon (2004). However, research has shown that only a third to a half of workers' time is spent on direct work activities (Uwakweh, 2000). An excessive amount of abortive time occurs as a combined result of the nature and ambiance of construction work. Site staff are frequently confronted with problems, such as extensive rework, waiting for materials and tools, constantly moving from one work area to another, confusing work, lack of identity with the project, and lack of recognition for performance (Smithers, 2000). A study carried out by US Department of Energy (DOE) and as noted by Dai, Goodrum, and Maloney (2007) on craft workers and foremen on 12 energy (nuclear or nuclear-related facility) projects during early 1980's was done in order to quantify the various problems which affected construction productivity retrogressively at job site and were ranked as first, material availability, second, tool availability, up till the last item in the other of work redone, overcrowded work areas, inspection delays, foreman incompetence, crew interference, craft turnover and absenteeism and lastly foreman changes respectively. Also studies have found that an unsatisfactory work environment can have adverse effects on workers motivation, as motivation is directly linked to productivity (Chishty and

Choudhry, 1996; Gilbert and Walker, 2001). Workers who are inadequately motivated according to Ng et al (2004) become apathetic or even resentful of their work. Unmotivated workers tend to make only a minimal effort, with a commensurate lowering of potential overall output and quality of work. Since the workers are directly responsible for carrying out the construction work, suitable motivation is necessary for maximizing their productivity (Ng et al, 2004). Motivation is the set of processes that determine the choices people make about their behaviours, motivation is a moral booster. In business, motivation is not synonymous with salaries; money is a means for accommodating the economic needs of workers. Motivation means an inner wholesome desire to exert effort without the external stimulus of money and according to Thwala and Monese (2008) is the ability of indoctrinating the personnel with a unity of purpose and maintaining a continuing, harmonious relationship among all people. Thwala and Monese (2008) also opines that motivation is a force which encourages and promotes a willingness of every employee to cooperate with every member of the team. To maintain it is to create and perpetuate the climate which brings harmony and equilibrium into the entire work group for the benefit of all who are involved in the company as a whole (Kazaz, Manisali, and Ulubeyli 2008).

### Process of Motivation

Work motivation is very complex to comprehend in the real sense but a clear cut meaning to it was

brought in lime light by process theories of motivation and Hungbo (2010) opines that many of the process theories cannot be linked to a single writer, but major approaches and leading writers under this heading include: Expectancy-based model by Vroom (1964), Lawler and Porter (1967) and Porter and Lawler (1968). Equity theory as postulated by Adams (1963), Goal theory by Locke (1968), Attribution theory as put forward by Heider (1958), Kelley (1971) and Maslow (1954) based on hierarchy of human needs.

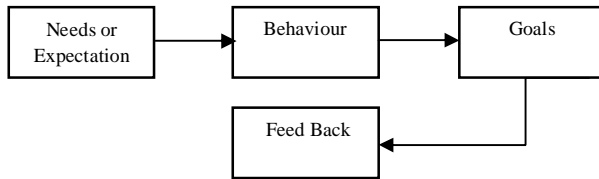


Figure 1: Motivation Process

Hungbo (2010) went further and summarily came out with four basic building blocks in the motivational process namely: Needs or expectation; behaviour; goals; and feedback as represented in the Figure 1 above and the generalised model of basic motivation according to Figure 2 below.

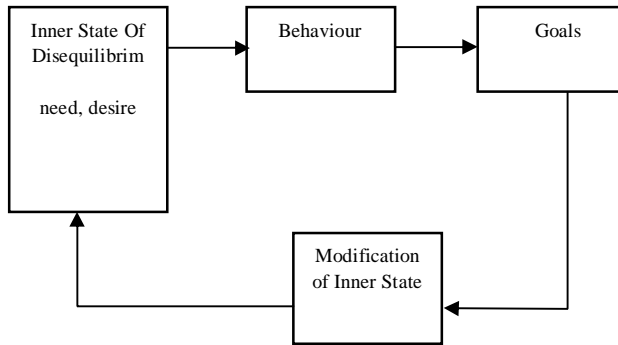


Figure 2: Generalised Model of basic Motivation

The main assumptions of the process block shown in figure 2 is that individuals possess in varying strengths a multitude of needs, desires and expectations, which are characterized by two phenomena. First, is that the emergence of such a need, desire or expectation generally creates a state of dis-equilibrium within the individuals which they will try to reduce. The presence of such needs, desire, or expectations is the second generally associated with an anticipation or belief that certain actions will lead to the reduction of this dis-equilibrium.

Since the effective motivation comes from within, by motivating others, the manager can do more than create proper conditions that cause people to do their work willingly and with enthusiasm.

**RESEARCH METHODS**

The construction sites surveyed were based in Lagos, Nigeria. The study was carried out basically in Lagos because of a large chunk of on-going construction

works in the study area. The research approach adopted in this study comprised of a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study comprises registered construction companies whose lists were compiled from the Federation of Construction Industry (FOCI). Total numbers of 51 out of 65 gotten from FOCI are active and 20 were randomly selected. Primary data was collected by using a close ended questionnaire with which a total number of 80 questionnaires were administered to the respondents, 58 were returned out of which 52 were considered fit for the analysis.

**DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS**

Table 1 shows that respondent who are casual workers constitute 59.62% of the total data collected, while the remaining 40.38% of the total respondent are professionals. 36.54% of the respondents are from medium sized construction organization while the remaining 63.46% are from large sized organisations. Four-fifth is employed by contractors while one-fifth is from consulting firms. The table also reveals that all the respondents have substantial level of academic and professional qualifications. About 40.38% of the respondents had a B.Sc and higher qualifications, 21.15% are professionally qualified. Majority of the respondents have substantial year of working experience and 42.31% have more than ten years working experience, 28.85% of the respondents have between 1-5years working experience. Conclusively the characteristics of the respondents shown and the level of involvement in construction industry is an indication that the data collected are reliable.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Respondents information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Nature of job</b>		
Joinery	3	5.77
Masonry/ bricklaying	13	25.00
Iron bender	4	7.69
Tiling	7	13.46
Carpentry	4	7.69
Quantity surveying	10	19.23
Civil engineering	5	9.62
Project management	6	11.54
Total	52	100.00
<b>Position of respondents</b>		
Site engineer	7	13.46
Construction manager	3	5.77
Labourer	31	59.62
Site quantity surveyor	5	9.62
Project manager	6	11.54
Total	52	100.00
<b>Academic qualifications</b>		
W.A.S.C/ Equivalent	29	55.77
OND	2	3.85
HND/B.Sc/B.Tech	11	21.15
M.Sc/MBA/M.Tech	10	19.23
Total	52	100.00
<b>Professional qualifications</b>		
MNIA	1	1.92
MNSE	5	9.62
MNIQS	2	3.85
MNIOB	3	5.77
NIL	41	78.85
Total	52	100.00

Table 1 Demographic information Frequency Cont.

Demographic information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Years of working experience</b>		
1 - 5	15	28.85
6 – 10	15	28.85
11-15	10	19.23
16-20	10	19.23
21-25	2	3.85
Total	52	100
<b>Size of organization</b>		
Medium	19	36.54
Large	33	63.46
Total	52	100
<b>Organization of respondents</b>		
Contractor	42	80.77
Project management consulting firm	10	19.23
Total	52	100

Table 2 shows the mean score, standard deviations and ranks of respondents' views on motivation of casual workers on construction sites. Eighteen motivational factors were identified through the literature reviewed. The result shows that the professionals considered thirteen (13) motivational factors higher while the labourer ranked twelve (12) motivational factors high. In general the respondents agreed with sixteen motivational factors on construction sites and disagreed with two motivational factors on construction sites. Among these motivational factors considered important by both professionals and labourers are; Staff work best when working equipment and facilities are adequately provided, was ranked first, while both workers' welfare being a paramount issue of concern to the top management and the importance of chief executive officer cooperating with staff tied and were ranked second.

Table 2 Motivation of casual workers on construction sites

Variables	Professionals	Labourer	Total	Total	Rank
	Mean Score	Mean Score	Mean Score	Std. Deviation	
Staff work is best when working equipment and facilities are adequately provided	4.67	4.29	4.44	0.75	1
Workers' welfare should be a paramount issue of concern to top management	4.43	4.42	4.42	0.70	2
It is important that the chief executive officer cooperates with staff	4.52	4.35	4.42	0.75	2
Well motivated staffs have a positive attitude towards work	4.57	4.16	4.33	0.73	4
Rewarding good work can contribute to more excellence and healthy competition	4.62	4.13	4.33	0.68	4
Monetary rewards can bring out the best in workers	4.19	4.06	4.12	0.76	6
Receiving credit for work done affects morale at work	4.24	3.94	4.06	0.87	7
Inter-personal relationship between top management and staff should be encouraged	4.14	4.00	4.06	0.70	8
Groups that fight for staff welfare within an Establishment should be established, promoted and encouraged	4.00	3.97	3.98	0.85	9
The organisation of Christmas/Easter /Salah/End of year parties is good and helps to encourage staff performance	3.76	3.87	3.83	0.81	10
Hospitals, staff clubs, staff quarters etc are important if a worker must perform well	3.67	3.90	3.81	0.79	11
Recreational facilities are important in every organisation	3.57	3.55	3.56	0.96	12
Work attitude is affected by the challenges encountered on the job	3.52	3.39	3.44	0.98	13
Fat salaries are the best tools with which to motivate workers	3.43	3.29	3.35	1.05	14
Even without motivation, some workers still put in their best	3.38	3.19	3.27	0.97	15
Workers put in their best when they are placed on little or no supervision at all	2.67	2.65	2.65	1.23	16
Workers will still perform well even if their salary is delayed	2.48	1.81	2.08	1.03	17
Favouritism on the part of the CEO/MD can contribute to much productivity	1.71	2.26	2.04	1.14	18

Table 3 Challenges to the motivation of casual workers

Variables	Professional Mean Score	Labourer Mean Score	Total Mean Score	Total Std. Deviation	Rank
Fee paid (workers' wages)	3.67	3.68	3.67	0.96	1
Poor health care	3.52	3.45	3.48	1.28	2
Source of income	3.86	3.23	3.48	1.13	3
No welfare benefit policy	3.67	3.19	3.38	1.11	4
Incompetence	3.48	2.94	3.15	1.11	5
Annual turn-over as it affect motivation	3.52	2.87	3.13	0.99	6
Consumption expenditure by the company	3.10	2.97	3.02	1.06	7
Level of education	2.90	2.97	2.94	1.14	8
Unregistered workers	3.05	2.84	2.92	1.12	9
Non registered beneficiary	2.62	2.94	2.81	1.03	10
Non-food items	2.33	3.00	2.73	1.03	11

Table 3 shows that eleven challenges to the motivation of casual workers on construction sites were confirmed by the survey. On visual inspection of the result on Table 3 seven factor were considered critical, these are: workers' wages, poor health care,

source of income, no welfare benefit policy, incompetence, annual turn-over as affect motivation and consumption expenditure by the company in that order.

Table 4 Perception of Labourers and professionals on the drivers and challenges of motivation for casual workers on construction sites

Motivation factors	N	Mean	t-test value	Df	p-value	Interpretation
Labourer	19	3.59	-1.497	50	0.141	no difference in opinions
Professional	33	3.73				
<b>Challenges</b>						
Labourer	19	3.00	-1.728	50	0.09	no difference in opinions
Professional	33	3.25				

Table 4 shows the result of the perception of the different groups of respondents who participated in the survey after the analysis conducted at 95% confidence limit. The result from the table implies that there is no significant difference in the opinion of the respondents as the p-values of the different categories is greater than 0.05.

**DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Table 2 shows that the professional rated thirteen motivational factors high while the labourer ranked twelve motivational factors high. In general the respondents agreed with sixteen motivational factors on construction sites and disagreed with two motivational factors on construction sites. Among eighteen motivational factor considered important by both professionals and labourers are: Staff work is best when working equipment and facilities are adequately provided ranked first, workers' welfare should be a paramount issue of concern to top management and It is important that the chief executive officer cooperates with staff (both were ranked second). Well motivated staffs have a positive attitude towards work and Rewarding good work and excellence can contribute to more excellence and healthy competition ranked fourth. Monetary rewards can bring out the best in workers was ranked sixth. The respondent disagreed that workers put in their best when they are placed on little or no supervision at all and workers will still perform well even if their salary is delayed. However, the critical factors are those having a mean score of 4 and above. The result implies that the opinions of the respondents are not far from one another as shown by the values of standard deviation.

The findings of this study corroborated the study of Hague (1985), which concluded that casual workers are motivated when they receive bonus payments. Apart from the question administered a self-interaction with these casual workers shows that there were continual complaints of receiving only minimal amounts of relevant information. Respondents complained of substandard tool quality, inadequate

supplies of tools, excessive theft, and lengthy delays in replacing stolen, lost, or broken tools. Table 3 shows that eleven challenges to the motivation of casual workers on construction sites were confirmed by the survey. On visual inspection of the result on Table 3 seven factor were considered critical and these are: workers' wages, poor health care, source of income, no welfare benefit policy, incompetence and so on. The above characteristics of contracting businesses pose challenges that are very different from those of other business and a lot of theoretical concept, principles and techniques of management have evolved in response to these challenges.

**CONCLUSION**

The study has examined the drivers of motivation for casual workers on construction sites and the challenges militating against them in Nigerian construction companies. From the result of the study, the following conclusions are made that staff work best when working equipment and facilities are adequately provided and workers' welfare should be a paramount issue of concern to the top management. Also, well-motivated staffs have a positive attitude towards work and rewarding good work can contribute to more excellence and healthy competition as monetary rewards bring out the best in workers. The main challenges faced by the motivation of casual worker are its sustainability, fees paid, poor health care, source of income and no welfare benefit policy as noted in the table 3.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study hereby recommended that Nigerian contractors should provide a policy that motivates casual workers and show strong support for welfare of the labourers as this will possibly, increase productivity and reduce rework. Also the organisation should encourage initiative and creativity by allowing for some flexibility in application of rules and regulation. Too much rigidity in applying the rules may constitute a setback in the modern growth of the organisation and dampen initiatives and creativities.

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