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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Impact of School Heads' Reward Systems on Teachers' Job Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools in Ukerewe District, Mwanza-Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of school heads' reward systems on teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Ukerewe district, Mwanza-Tanzania. This study was guided by Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959). The study employed mixed research approaches and explanatory sequential research design. Data was collected using questionnaire and interview whereas quantitative data were analysed using SPSS version 26 and interpreted through descriptive statistics and qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis. The study found that both financial and non-financial reward systems implemented by school heads significantly enhance teachers' job effectiveness by increasing motivation, morale, and commitment. Teachers responded more positively and performed better when rewards were structured, fair, and consistently applied. The study concluded that reward systems that are well-managed and equitably distributed have a direct and positive impact on teacher performance and overall teaching quality. It is recommended that education stakeholders establish transparent and inclusive reward systems that integrate both financial and non-financial incentives to maintain high teacher motivation and improve educational outcomes.

Keywords: School heads; reward systems; teachers' Job effectiveness

INTRODUCTION

Reward systems implemented by school heads play a critical role in enhancing teachers' job effectiveness, with global, regional, and local evidence consistently showing that recognition and incentives significantly influence teacher performance and educational outcomes. Globally, reward systems have been widely recognized as essential tools for improving teacher effectiveness and job satisfaction. School heads who implement well-structured reward systems such as bonuses, promotions, recognition, and career advancement opportunities create a positive work environment that fosters professionalism and instructional quality (Filmer et al., 2023). For example, in countries like Poland, Turkey, and the Philippines, reward-based motivation has been shown to enhance teachers' willingness to meet professional expectations, improving their overall performance and student achievement (Onyefulu et al., 2023; Comighud & Arevalo, 2020). These systems acknowledge teacher contributions and drive commitment to school goals.

In various African countries, reward systems are equally emphasized as critical components of school leadership. In Kenya, principals who regularly

recognize and reward teachers' efforts through both formal incentives and informal praise report improved morale and teacher productivity (Musyoki et al., 2024). Similarly, in Nigeria and South Africa, studies have shown that rewards such as promotions, verbal recognition, and psychological support contribute to enhanced job performance and reduced teacher turnover (Chukwuemeka et al., 2021; Mutesasira & Marongwe, 2024). In Zambia, a lack of recognition has been linked to teacher frustration and disengagement, showing the vital role school heads play in implementing reward-based motivation (Mugala & Kabeta, 2023).

Within Tanzania, school administrators' reward strategies are essential to addressing the challenges faced by teachers in public secondary schools. Historically, post-independence efforts led by Julius Nyerere sought to recognize the importance of public servants, including teachers, through improved rights and benefits (Kiheka, 2021). However, many schools today still struggle with ineffective or absent reward systems. According to Paschal and Tangi (2022), job recognition and incentives are crucial for boosting teacher satisfaction and reducing negative behaviors like absenteeism and low engagement. The broader national context reveals that when rewards are lacking or poorly managed, teachers lose interest, resulting in decreased performance.

In Ukerewe District, Mwanza Region, the impact of poor or nonexistent reward systems is particularly severe. Teachers in public secondary schools report low morale due to a lack of recognition, irregular or unfair performance appraisals, and limited access to career development opportunities (Mnjokava, 2024). The district's geographical isolation worsens the problem, limiting access to professional training and resources (Yusuph & Mkulu, 2022). School heads often fail to acknowledge teachers' efforts, leading to absenteeism, tardiness, and disengagement in teaching duties. If not addressed, these issues will continue to undermine teacher effectiveness and student achievement. Strengthening reward systems even through low-cost strategies like public praise, certificates, or leadership roles can greatly improve teacher morale and performance in this challenging local context (Mugala & Kabeta, 2023). Therefore, this study evaluated the impact of school heads' reward systems on teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools in Ukerewe district, Mwanza-Tanzania.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Review

The study was guided by Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, which distinguishes between two categories of factors affecting job satisfaction and performance: hygiene factors such as salary, working conditions, and institutional policies and motivators such as recognition, achievement, and responsibility. The theory assumes that while hygiene factors help prevent dissatisfaction, they do not inherently lead to motivation or improved performance; rather, it is the presence of motivators that drives individuals to excel in their roles (Charlotte, 2023). This theoretical framework provided a basis for examining how school heads' reward systems particularly those involving intrinsic motivators impact teacher morale, commitment, and job effectiveness in public secondary schools. Herzberg's theory was instrumental in helping the study assess whether current reward practices in Ukerewe District address not only basic employment needs but also the deeper psychological factors that influence teaching quality and student outcomes (Miah & Hasan, 2022).

Empirical Review

Studies in various contexts highlight the significant role of reward systems in preventing burnout and enhancing job satisfaction. Groß et al. (2025) used the Effort–Reward Imbalance (ERI) model to demonstrate that German school leaders experiencing high effort with low reward were at increased risk of burnout. The study emphasized the need for balanced reward systems to promote well-being. Similarly, in South Africa, Mutesasira and Marongwe (2024) found that psychological support and acknowledgment of effort were vital for teacher performance in rural schools, suggesting that non-monetary rewards can be powerful motivators post-COVID-19.

Ali et al. (2021), studying secondary schools in Pakistan, revealed that while teachers felt underappreciated, fair workload distribution and trust from school heads improved their performance pointing to the value of intrinsic rewards like respect and autonomy. In Nigeria, Ezeala and Oluwo (2019) found that promotions significantly boosted teacher morale, while monetary compensation had minimal predictive impact. These findings indicate that structured career advancement and recognition may be more effective than financial incentives alone in sustaining motivation. Financial rewards continue to play an important, though

limited, role in teacher motivation. Aisa et al. (2024) reported a positive but moderate correlation between monetary incentives and teacher performance in Uganda, accounting for only 16.5% of performance variance. The study also highlighted perceived fairness as a critical mediator, reinforcing the idea that how rewards are administered matters as much as the rewards themselves. The limited explanatory power of financial incentives suggests a need for broader, more comprehensive motivational strategies.

In Kenya, multiple studies examined the effectiveness of school-based reward systems. Okwatsa (2021) found that principals' recognition and support for professional development positively influenced teacher job performance. Meanwhile, Ogada et al. (2020), in a mixed-methods study, observed misalignment between administrative and teacher perceptions of reward system effectiveness. The research emphasized the need for performance-based incentives aligned with industry standards and called for merit-based, timely, and transparent rewards to foster job satisfaction.

Within Tanzania, several studies have highlighted the critical role of effective reward systems. Makule and Otieno (2024) found that incentives such as job promotions, financial support, and supportive management significantly improved teacher performance in Arusha. In Ilala Municipality, Swai and Malingumu (2022) noted that while professional development and timely payments improved performance, poor working conditions and demotivating environments offset these gains. The study concluded that reward systems must be transparent, equitable, and context-specific to improve teacher morale and effectiveness sustainably.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, mainly quantitative, to examine the impact of school heads' reward systems on teachers' job effectiveness in Ukerewe District, Mwanza, Tanzania. Using an explanatory sequential design, the research collected and analyzed quantitative data first, followed by qualitative data to provide deeper insight. The target population included 596 individuals, categorized as 1 District Secondary Education Officer (DSEO), 25 Ward Education Officers (WEOs), 32 school heads, and 538 teachers (comprising 359 males and 179 females). A total sample size of 114 respondents was selected using a purposive sampling to 1 DSEO, 4 WEOs, 5 school heads and stratified, and simple random sampling techniques to 104 teachers. Questionnaires were administered to teachers to collect quantifiable data, while semi-structured interviews were conducted with education officers and heads of schools to gain qualitative insights. Instrument reliability was ensured through the test-retest method (yielding a coefficient of 0.9), while content validity was reviewed and confirmed by education experts. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, producing frequencies, percentages, tables, and figures, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to identify patterns and narratives. Ethical approval was obtained from St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) and local education authorities, with informed consent, confidentiality, and academic honesty strictly upheld. A pilot study was conducted in one school to test research tools, ensuring that the final instruments were accurate, clear, and dependable for the main study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Impact of School Heads' Reward Systems on Teachers' Job Effectiveness

This aimed to evaluate the impact of school heads' reward systems on teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools. The data was collected from teachers, heads of secondary schools, WEOs and DSEO. Besides, respondents were given Likert scale statements to evaluate the impact of school heads' reward systems on teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools. Their responses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The Impact of School Heads' Reward Systems on Teachers' Job Effectiveness in Public Secondary Schools

No.	Items	SD		D		N		A		SA	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Financial rewards positively impact my motivation to perform well in my teaching role.	1	1	2	1.9	8	7.7	49	47.1	44	42.3
2.	Non-financial rewards enhance my job effectiveness as a teacher.	6	5.8	1	1	9	8.7	50	48.1	38	36.5

3.	Teachers receiving regular financial rewards are generally more effective in teaching practices.	1	1	2	1.9	4	3.8	41	39.4	56	53.8
4.	I believe that a well-structured reward system can improve the overall job performance of teachers in my school.	0	0	1	1	2	1.9	38	36.5	63	60.6
5.	The lack of sufficient rewards negatively impacts my teaching effectiveness.	2	1.9	6	5.8	6	5.8	44	42.3	46	44.2
6.	Teachers who are recognized for their achievements tend to put more effort into their teaching responsibilities.	0	0	2	1.9	5	4.8	47	45.2	50	48.1
7.	The reward system in my school encourages me to perform at my best and be more effective in delivering lessons.	0	0	5	4.8	5	4.8	42	40.4	52	50

Key: SD-strongly disagree, D-disagree, N-neutral, A-agree, SA-strongly agree
Source: Field Data (2025)

Financial Rewards and Teacher Motivation

The data from table 1 shows that 89.4% of the teachers (47.1% agreed and 42.3% strongly agreed) felt that financial rewards such as salary and bonuses positively influence their motivation. Only a small portion (1% strongly disagreed, 1.9% disagreed) expressed a negative view. This suggests that most teachers see financial rewards as a key driver for working harder and performing well. As one of the heads of school said:

> Teachers are more committed and enthusiastic when their salaries are paid on time, and small financial incentives like transport support or performance bonuses are given. I have noticed that even modest financial rewards help reduce stress and keep teachers focused on their work. We try to make sure no one feels overlooked. (HOS, June 2025)

Therefore, when teachers are financially supported and rewarded fairly, they are more likely to stay motivated, show up consistently, and perform effectively. Financial security helps them focus on teaching rather than external financial struggles. This finding aligns with Aisa et al. (2024), who reported that monetary rewards significantly influence teacher performance and show a strong positive correlation. The emphasis on perceived fairness as a mediating factor reinforces that fair and consistent financial support motivates teachers and enhances both academic and non-academic outcomes. Therefore, once teachers are rewarded appropriately and equitably, their focus shifts from financial concerns to delivering effective teaching to students.

Non-Financial Rewards and Job Effectiveness

Survey results from table 1 also show that 84.6% of teachers (48.1% agreed and 36.5% strongly agreed) believe that non-financial rewards such as recognition, praise, and professional development help improve their job effectiveness. A few disagreed (5.8% strongly disagreed, 1% disagreed), but the overall message is that appreciation matters. About this, a Ward Education Officer (WEO) shared,

> We advise school leaders to use simple non-financial rewards like public praise, certificates of excellence, or leadership roles in academic programs. Recognition doesn't always need to cost money. When teachers feel valued through appreciation, they show more commitment, creativity, and care in their work (WEO, June 2025)

Thus, non-financial rewards are powerful motivators. They promote teacher self-worth, build confidence, and help teachers feel their work is meaningful, leading to stronger classroom performance and improved student learning. This result agreed with Ali et al. (2021). They stated that appropriate workload distribution and trust in their abilities positively influenced performance. This aligns with job rewards, as intrinsic and extrinsic

rewards play a critical role in teacher motivation. Job rewards, such as recognition, fair workload distribution, and confidence in teachers' competencies, are significant factors influencing job satisfaction and performance. This also aligns with motivation-hygiene theory, which identifies intrinsic rewards like recognition and trust as key motivators that enhance job effectiveness, satisfaction and performance, especially when teachers feel valued and supported in their roles.

Financial Rewards and Teaching Practice

When asked whether teachers who receive regular financial rewards are more effective in their practices in table 1, 93.2% agreed (53.8% strongly agreed and 39.4% agreed). Only a tiny number disagreed (1% strongly disagreed, 1.9% disagreed), indicating that financial incentives are strongly linked to how well teachers perform in class. District Education Officer explained:

> Our district has seen better performance in schools where teachers receive modest financial rewards for extra effort, like exam preparation or managing clubs. Teachers become more consistent and take more ownership of their work. Financial motivation, when paired with recognition, really improves classroom results. (DSEO, June 2025)

This implies that once teachers are financially rewarded, they tend to put more energy into lesson planning and student engagement. It promotes a stronger sense of responsibility and professionalism in their teaching duties. Similarly, Makule and Otieno (2024) revealed that incentives, such as financial support, effective management, and a conducive work environment, significantly improved teacher performance by reducing stress, increasing motivation, and encouraging extended work hours. This supports motivation-hygiene theory, which emphasizes that financial incentives (hygiene factors) reduce dissatisfaction, while recognition and responsibility (motivators) enhance job performance and satisfaction. Usually, providing fair financial rewards and supportive management structures encourages teachers to invest more effort and time in their work, ultimately improving instructional quality and student outcomes.

Well-Structured Reward Systems and Job Performance

Table 1 shows Teachers strongly supported structured reward systems, with 97.1% agreeing that such systems improve job performance (60.6% strongly agreed, 36.5% agreed). This shows that rewards and how they are organized and distributed matter deeply to teachers. To reflect this, one head of school stated:

> We have implemented a performance system where good work gets recognized each term through teacher-of-the-month awards or extra training opportunities. This structured approach keeps things fair and transparent. When teachers know what to aim for and what they can earn, they stay focused and driven. (HOS, June 2025).

This response provides a clear, transparent reward system which encourages fairness and motivates teachers to improve their performance. It eliminates confusion or favoritism and encourages a sense of purpose and ambition in the teaching team. Okwatsa (2021) agreed that rewarding teachers, recognizing their efforts, and supporting professional development positively impacted teachers' job performance, thereby contributing to a positive work environment. This also aligns with Herzberg's Motivational-Hygiene Theory, where rewards and recognition are key motivators that enhance job satisfaction. By providing fair and transparent rewards, schools address both hygiene factors (such as policies and relationships) and motivators (like achievement and recognition), leading to improved teacher performance and a more positive work environment.

Lack of Rewards and Declining Effectiveness

From table 1 when teachers were asked if the lack of both financial and non-financial rewards affected their teaching effectiveness, 86.5% of teachers (44.2% strongly agreed, 42.3% agreed) said yes. Only 13.5% disagreed or remained neutral. This shows that when recognition is missing, it negatively impacts teacher morale. District Education Officer explained:

> When teachers go for months without any form of appreciation or reward, whether financial or verbal, you start to see fatigue and reduced performance. They feel invisible. That is why we're urging school leaders to recognize small wins and support teachers despite low budgets. (DSEO, June 2025).

Therefore, lack of recognition leads to frustration, emotional exhaustion, and reduced classroom effectiveness. Consistent appreciation can help maintain teacher motivation and prevent disengagement even in low-resource settings. This is supported by Chitrakar and Nisanth (2023) who argued that the decline in academic achievement among students leads to mental stress, lack of motivation, and

decreased self-esteem. Therefore, the motivation-hygiene theory added that recognition fulfills key motivational needs like competence and relatedness, directly impacting teacher effectiveness and well-being. Even in low-resource situations, consistent verbal or symbolic appreciation can prevent emotional tiredness and sustain classroom effectiveness.

Recognition Increases Teacher Effort

Table 1 Almost all teachers (93.3%) agreed that recognition encourages greater effort (48.1% strongly agreed, 45.2% agreed). Only 6.7% disagreed or stayed neutral. This shows that teachers are more likely to go above and beyond in their duties when they feel appreciated. One head of school stated that:

> I make it a habit to recognize teachers' good work during morning briefings or staff meetings. A few kind words, a thank-you note, or a clap from colleagues boost their confidence. When teachers feel their hard work is seen, they naturally become more committed. (HOS, June 2025)

Recognition increases teacher effort and engagement. Simple acts of appreciation motivate teachers to give more of themselves, leading to better teaching and improved student performance. Similarly, Okwatsa (2021) found that rewarding teachers, recognizing their efforts, and supporting professional development positively impacted teachers' job performance, thereby contributing to a positive work environment. Therefore, recognizing teachers' efforts contributes to overall job effectiveness. This is because teachers are more appreciated in their workplaces.

Reward System and Lesson Delivery

Table 1 Lastly, when asked if the reward system helps them deliver lessons more effectively, 90.4% of teachers (50% strongly agreed, 40.4% agreed) confirmed it. Only 9.6% disagreed or stayed neutral. This suggests that rewards directly affect how well teachers plan and present their lessons. In connection to this, a head of school noted,

> We introduced a small incentive program for lesson preparation and classroom innovation. Teachers who prepare quality lessons or use creative teaching methods are appreciated during assemblies. This has made many improve their delivery and take lesson planning more seriously." (HOS, June 2025)

This shows that rewards encourage teachers to put extra effort into how they teach. A motivated teacher prepares better, uses more engaging strategies, and ultimately delivers higher-quality education to students. Likewise, Swai and Malingumu (2022) indicated that elements such as timely salary payments, clear performance criteria, and opportunities for professional development were associated with improved teacher performance. Therefore, the more transparent and efficient incentive systems, better facilities, and equitable pay, the higher teacher morale.

Furthermore, the researcher needed to reveal respondents' overview of the understanding of the school heads' reward system. The responses are as follows.

Teachers' responses about the reward system reveal three different understandings. Firstly, some teachers see the rewards system as a strong source of motivation and recognition. They believe that acknowledging their efforts through praise, certificates, or other incentives boosts their morale and encourages them to perform better. Secondly, other teachers feel that the reward system is inconsistent or limited. They express frustration that rewards are either rare, given to only a few, or not based on performance, leading to unfairness and discouragement. Lastly, some teachers view the rewards system more broadly, not just as financial or verbal appreciation, but as opportunities for professional development, such as attending training, receiving scholarships, or being considered for promotion. These teachers see growth-oriented rewards as valuable tools for long-term career advancement and motivation. Nonetheless, one head of school revealed that:

> We try to make our reward system meaningful by recognizing small and big achievements. While some teachers appreciate things like certificates and verbal praise during assemblies, others are more motivated by opportunities for growth, like being nominated for training or leadership roles. When rewards are consistent and linked to performance, I have noticed that teachers feel more encouraged and take their work more seriously. However, we also need to improve how fairly we distribute rewards so that no one feels overlooked (HOS, June 2025).

This response shows that a well-structured reward system, even with simple forms of recognition, can significantly improve teacher motivation and job commitment. When school heads actively acknowledge teachers' efforts, a positive work culture encourages dedication and high performance. This ultimately

contributes to better teaching quality and improved student outcomes. This directly supports Hussain et al. (2019) finding that employee rewards and recognition have a significant and positive effect on employee performance. Furthermore, the implied positive emotional state of feeling valued and the resulting commitment among teachers likely contributes to reduced job stress and increased perceived organizational support among teachers.

The overall results clearly show that financial and non-financial rewards are crucial in motivating teachers and improving their job effectiveness. Teachers feel more valued, committed, and perform better when they receive timely financial incentives and regular recognition from school leaders. Interview responses from heads of schools and education officers emphasize the importance of structured reward systems and consistent appreciation to maintain high teacher morale. An effective reward system creates a positive work environment that supports better teaching and enhances student learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that school heads' reward systems both financial and non-financial significantly influence teachers' job effectiveness in public secondary schools. Most teachers reported that timely financial rewards such as salaries and bonuses improved their motivation and classroom performance. Similarly, non-financial rewards like recognition, appreciation, and opportunities for professional growth were seen as key to boosting morale, job satisfaction, and commitment. Teachers who felt acknowledged and supported demonstrated greater enthusiasm, responsibility, and improved teaching quality. Moreover, structured and fairly implemented reward systems helped create a more positive work environment, while the absence or inconsistency of such rewards led to frustration and reduced effectiveness. Overall, the study shows that meaningful reward systems contribute directly to teacher performance and better educational outcomes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, it is strongly recommended that school heads, district education officers, and education policymakers prioritize the development and implementation of well-structured, equitable, and transparent reward systems that combine both financial and non-financial incentives. Financial rewards such as timely salary disbursement, performance bonuses, and hardship allowances should be consistently delivered and aligned with clearly defined performance metrics. Equally important, non-financial incentives including regular verbal recognition, certificates, leadership roles, and access to professional development should be institutionalized within schools to acknowledge daily efforts and long-term achievements. Reward systems should be clearly communicated, inclusive, and based on fair criteria, to eliminate perceptions of favoritism and enhance trust. Additionally, school heads should receive capacity-building training on effective motivational leadership, reward system planning, and emotional intelligence to ensure all teachers feel valued and engaged. Even in low-resource environments, symbolic recognition and career development opportunities can go a long way in improving teacher morale. When effectively managed, these systems foster a positive school culture, increase teacher retention, and ultimately lead to improved student outcomes and overall institutional performance.

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