

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND LECTURERS' JOB  
PERFORMANCE IN STATE-OWNED UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH CENTRAL  
STATES, NIGERIA**

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the influence of organisational distributive justice and job performance among employees of state-owned universities in North-central Nigeria. The objective was to determine the relationship between distributive justice and Lecturers' job performance in state-owned universities in North Central, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population comprised 4,278 academic staff across selected State-owned universities in North Central Nigeria. From this population, a sample size of 2,141 respondents was drawn, representing 50% of the total population, to ensure sufficient representation and generalisability of findings. The study utilised a stratified sampling technique to capture academic perspectives across institutions. Data were collected using a structured and validated questionnaire designed to measure both independent and dependent variables. The data were analysed using*

*descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis to determine the strength and direction of relationships between distributive justice and job performance. The findings indicated that distributive justice is significantly related to the job performance of Lecturers of State owned Universities in North Central Nigeria, suggesting that equitable reward systems are central to enhancing staff performance. The study concludes that institutionalising fairness across all administrative and relational processes can improve Lecturers' morale, trust, and performance outcomes. It recommends that university managements adopt justice-based policies and ensure transparent governance practices to boost productivity and institutional effectiveness.*

*KEYWORDS: Distributive Justice, Job Performance, Lecturers.*

## **Introduction**

Justice in any organisation is a theme that can never be overemphasized. Though a multi-faceted construct, the construct of distributive justice stands out in its importance within any organisation. Distributive justice is the subjective assessment of the fairness related to the outcomes or advantages obtained by an individual. Distributive justice is centered on the equity model proposed by Adams (1965), and it is perceived to refer to the principle of fairness in the distribution of awards, benefits, and other resources within an organisation. That is, the subjective perception of individuals that they have been paid an equitable share of the value derived from work-related results (for example, salary). This principle mandates the allocation of rights, benefits, and duties based on individual skills

This perception also includes responsibilities, commodities, services, opportunities, penalties/rewards, positions, status, and advancement, among individuals based on their similarities

and differences. In essence, distributive justice refers to a form of organisational justice that prioritizes the perception by lecturers, that the compensation they receive as they invest in the organization, is equitable in relation to the results of their value-added efforts. This agrees with the opinion of Ugwu and Onyenje (2015), who hold that distributive justice pertains to the inherent fact that lecturers are not uniformly treated and the distribution of outcomes varies among different universities. Simply put, distributive justice pertains to the equitable distribution of benefits among educators. Hence, the lecturer is concerned with the justice and equity practiced in his university, and this greatly affects his performance at his job.

The components of distributive justice, as defined by Okpara (2016), encompass the equitable distribution of money and other organisational outcomes such as promotions, rewards, penalties, work programs, benefits, and performance evaluations. In essence, distributive justice refers to a form of organisational justice that prioritises the perception of individuals that the compensation they receive is equitable in relation to the results of their value-added efforts. According to Ugwu and Onyenje (2015), distributive justice is displayed in the fact that lecturers are not uniformly treated, and the distribution of outcomes varies among different universities. Hence, the lecturer is concerned with the justice and equity witnessed at his University,

## **Statement of the Problem**

In the state-owned universities in the north central geopolitical zone in Nigeria, the researcher perceives that the performance of lecturers has been trending downward recently. The level of performance of lecturers at work seems to have shown very little improvement, despite government efforts to encourage effective learning through the provision of resources and an improved work environment. There seems to have been accusations made against lecturers that they don't take their responsibilities seriously, such as timely delivery of lectures and compiling of student results.

Whatever the situation, it's crucial to remember that how well academics do on the job and how the university administration treats them are related. Any university administration can only expect the best performance from its Lecturers if it treats them justly and fairly. To this end, it is expected of the university administration to make sure that Lecturers who uphold their commitment to their work and perform at a high standard are appropriately recognised, given promotions, and assigned to positions of authority and responsibility. However, in the north central geopolitical zone, this doesn't seem to be the case as many State-owned universities seem to be in danger of collapsing because nepotism, tribalism, and sectionalism have flourished within the administration instead of treating its instructors with justice, fairness, and equity. The researcher has observed that brain drain seems to be on the increase within the system as a result of the alleged inequity in our State-owned universities located in the north-central geopolitical zone. On account of this perception, there seems to be the impression that they have been treated unfairly; those who dare to stay are so demotivated that their performance at work is practically at an all-time low. Poor welfare packages, inadequate incentives, low standards of work in some State-owned Universities, and a cavalier attitude towards academic achievement from the State governments in charge of these institutions are a few instances of the perceived injustice. It appears that most State-owned universities are vulnerable to strike actions because of this quality of service. Academic narrow-mindedness appears to be on the increase, encouraged by the nepotism and favouritism that sometimes seem to be directed at non-indigenes of the State in certain universities.

It seems to the researcher that the unbridged gap between the distributive justice found in stateowned universities and what obtains in other institutions (federal and /or private) could also affect lecturers' job performance and productivity. Going by the results of the literature review, it has been observed that distributive justice, its indices, and concepts are more versatile in the developed world compared to developing countries like Nigeria. Local literature domiciled within the country is also relatively scarce. The researcher hopes that the results of this study will add to the available information on organisational justice.

## **Objective**

The objective of this study was to determine the relationship between distributive justice and lecturers' job performance in State-Owned Universities in North Central States, Nigeria.

## **Research Question**

The research question answered in this study was:

To what extent does Distributive Justice relate to Lecturers' Job Performance in State-Owned Universities in North Central States, Nigeria?

## **Hypothesis**

The following null hypothesis was tested in this study:

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant relationship between distributive justice and lecturers' job performance in State-Owned Universities in North Central States, Nigeria

## **Research Methodology**

A cross-sectional quantitative survey strategy was adopted for this investigation. This is because in a cross-sectional study, data is gathered from homogeneous participants at several locations (Anikweze, 2013).

Hence, this study was interested in finding out the relationship between distributive justice and lecturers' job performance in state-owned universities in North Central Geopolitical States, Nigeria.

Within this context, the researcher analyzed lecturers employed in all the state-owned universities of the north central states, the faculties in the said universities, and lecturers, that is, the target population. Furthermore, the researcher clearly explained the sample and sampling methods used to determine the overall sample size of the study.

The target population consisted of lecturers from the six State-owned universities located in north central Nigeria. The most recent census or headcount data of lecturers employed in these universities was acquired from the Registries of the respective institutions. Such action was taken in order to guarantee the genuineness of the data.

**Table 1: Distribution of the Study Population by State-Owned Universities, Number of Faculties and Number of Lecturers in North Central States, Nigeria.**

S/N	Name of State-owned University	No. of Faculties	No. of Lecturers	No. of sample per University.
1	Nasarawa State University, Keffi	10	756	378
2	Benue State University, Makurdi	13	976	488
3	Abubakar Audu University, Ayingba	07	883	442
4	Kwara State University, Malete- Ilorin	11	729	365
5	Plateau State University, Bokokos	09	715	358
6	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai	08	219	110
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>4,278</b>	<b>2141</b>

Source: MIS and Personnel Registries of the various universities. (2025)

The study sampled 2141 lecturers out of 4278 population of lecturers in State-owned universities in north central Nigeria. This sample represent 50% of the entire population of lecturers working with State-owned universities in north central Nigeria. Sample selection was conducted using a multistage random sampling technique. The first stage involved purposive sampling to choose the six State owned universities. This was followed by the utilization of simple random sampling technique in selecting faculties from the six purposively selected universities in north central Nigeria. Fifty percent of the faculties were selected from each of the universities, and the selection was based on proportion to size of the faculties, bringing the total to 29 faculties as presented in Table 2. Out of the chosen faculties, lecturers were chosen to constitute the 50% necessary for the respondents.

**Table 2: Distribution of Sample by Sampled Faculties and Lecturers in State-Owned Universities in North Central States, Nigeria**

S/N	Name of State-owned University	Faculties Sampled (50% of Sample population)	of Lecturers
1	Nasarawa State University, Keffi	05	378
2	Benue State University, Makurdi	07	488
3	Abubakar Audu University, Ayingba	04	442
4	Kwara State University, Malete-Ilorin	06	365
5	Plateau State University, Bokkos	05	358

6	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai	04	110
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>2141</b>

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The data collection instrument for this study consisted of a questionnaire that was specifically designed by the researcher. The researcher made use of this instrument due to its capacity to efficiently collect data from a substantial number of respondents in a significantly limited timeframe.

The questionnaire was sent to experts for face and content validity. This study assessed the consistency of the reliability estimate by employing the Cronbach alpha and an alpha value of 0.655 was obtained. The instrument was personally administered to the respondents by the researcher, with the assistance of two highly trained research assistants. A descriptive statistic of frequency counts, percentages, and means were used for analysis of the research question. The hypothesis was tested using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) at a significance level of 0.05. The analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

### Data Analysis and Results

**Table 3: Response Rate of Questionnaire**

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Questionnaire Distributed	2141	100.0
Returned	2061	96.3
Not Returned	80	3.7

Invalid	42	2.0
Valid	2099	98.0

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**Source:** Field Survey (2025)

Out of the 2,141 copies of the questionnaire distributed to respondents, 2,062 were returned, representing a response rate of 96.3%. Among the returned questionnaires, 43 were deemed invalid, constituting 2% of the total. The valid questionnaires amounted to 1,958, accounting for 91.5%. This high response rate indicates a good level of cooperation from the respondents and ensures the representativeness of the data. Table 3 shows the detailed breakdown of the response rate

## Research Questions

To what extent does Distributive Justice Relate to Lecturers' Job Performance in State-Owned Universities in North Central States, Nigeria?

**Table 5: Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Distributive Justice**

Item	<i>f</i>	SA		A		D		SD	
		%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	
I consider my work load to be quite fair	823	38.4	862	40.3	272	12.7	184	8.6	
I think that my level of pay is fair.	839	39.2	667	31.2	326	15.2	309	14.4	
I consider my personal duties to be rewarding	920	43.0	728	34.0	370	17.3	123	5.7	

Overall, the rewards I receive here are quite fair	802	37.5	698	32.6	370	17.3	271	12.7
I feel that my job responsibilities are fair	898	41.9	782	36.5	307	14.3	154	7.2
Promotions or unscheduled pay increases here usually depend on how well a person performs on his/her job.	811	37.9	668	31.2	434	20.3	228	10.6
Under the present system, financial rewards are seldom related to lecturer's performance	918	42.9	737	34.4	298	13.9	188	8.8
There is a tendency for promotions here to be given unilaterally regardless of the lecturer's performance at work.	810	37.8	870	40.6	266	12.4	195	9.1
Under the present administration, lecturers here get few tangible rewards for excellence	874	40.8	735	34.3	287	13.4	245	11.4
Performance appraisals do influence lecturers' performance within the University.	884	41.3	655	30.6	417	19.5	185	8.6
Sometimes, lecturers' appraisals are based on criteria not related to their job								



	867	40.5	738	34.5	263	12.3	273	12.8
Lecturers would often get demoted or removed from their positions in the university if their performance is poor.	933	43.6	771	36.0	283	13.2	154	7.2
Lecturers' performance ratings always present a fair and accurate picture of their actual input at work.	810	37.8	744	34.8	375	17.5	212	9.9
A lecturer will always be promoted or given a higher position if they perform especially well at work.	820	38.3	687	32.1	461	21.5	173	8.1

**Source:** Field Survey (2025).

Table 5 presents a detailed analysis of the questionnaire items under Distributive Justice. Each item was evaluated using a four-point Likert scale, and the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents' choices are shown for Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The responses reflect varying levels of agreement, which give insight into the participants' perceptions of distributive justice in their work environment. From the table above, the item numbered 1 shows the highest SA response with 823 respondents (38.4%), while item number 2 recorded 667 Agree (A) responses accounting for 31.2%. Some items like numbers 3 and 4, show relatively lower agreement rates and higher disagreement, indicating divergent views among respondents, which suggests that while the overall perception of distributive justice is favourable, there are variations across specific sub-elements. This outcome supports the view of Ngozi (2016), who is of the opinion that distributive justice among individuals in organisations is primarily based on their similarities and differences. Also, Ugwu and Onyenje (2015) supported these variations when they quipped that distributive justice pertains to the inherent fact that lecturers are not uniformly treated and the distribution of outcomes varies among different universities. Folorunso, Adewale, and Abodunde (2016) also agreed with the findings of this study when they stated that there was a substantial correlation between the distributive justice dimension of organisational justice and the work performance of lecturers. In contrast, findings from a study by Olowookere, Adejumo, and Alemede (2018) held that there is no significant correlation between distributive justice and dutifulness when it comes to organisational citizenship behaviour. In the same vein, investigations carried out by Nwokolo, Ifeando, and Anazodo (2016) suggested that organizational justice (and particularly distributive justice) does not predict engagement and work performance of teachers. Karanja (2016) also held that among several other predictors, distributive Justice was not identified as a significant predictor of organisational performance

**Table 8: Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Job Performance**

Item	SA		A		D		SD	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%



I consistently prepare thoroughly for my lectures.	830	38.8	739	34.5	260	12.1	312	14.6
I effectively communicate course content to my students.	814	38.0	722	33.7	300	14.0	305	14.2
I meet my teaching deadlines and submit required reports on time.	875	40.9	756	35.3	277	12.9	233	10.9
I receive positive feedback from students regarding my teaching.	976	45.6	788	36.8	252	11.8	125	5.8
I regularly engage in academic research activities.	868	40.5	776	36.2	309	14.4	188	8.8
I publish scholarly articles in reputable academic journals.	855	39.9	778	36.3	317	14.8	191	8.9
I participate actively in departmental and faculty meetings.	844	39.4	756	35.3	423	19.8	118	5.5
I collaborate well with my colleagues on academic and non-academic matters.	950	44.4	700	32.7	302	14.1	189	8.8
I attend classes regularly and punctually.	834	39.0	721	33.7	358	16.7	228	10.6
I respond to students' academic needs and concerns promptly.	991	46.3	800	37.4	234	10.9	116	5.4
I contribute meaningfully to curriculum development and review.	810	37.8	688	32.1	372	17.4	271	12.7
I seek opportunities for professional development and training.	790	36.9	658	30.7	409	19.1	284	13.3
I perform administrative duties assigned to me effectively.	944	44.1	779	36.4	307	14.3	111	5.2
I contribute to the achievement of my department's academic goals.	893	41.7	714	33.3	293	13.7	241	11.3

Source: Field Survey (2025).

### **Hypothesis:**

The following null hypothesis was tested in this study:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between Distributive Justice and Lecturers' Job Performance in State-Owned Universities in North Central States, Nigeria.

**Table 9: Coefficient Table of the Study Variables**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Intercept	-0.055	0.116	-0.47	0.639



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Distributive Justice	0.314	0.014	21.70	0.000
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Source: SPSS Output (2025)

Based on the regression output in Table 9, the p-value for Distributive Justice is 0.000. Since this value is less than the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that Distributive Justice ( $B = 0.314$ ) has a statistically significant relationship with Job Performance.

## Findings

The current study confirms that distributive justice positively and significantly impacts job performance. This result has been seen to enhance Lecturers' trust, motivation, and willingness to contribute positively to organizational goals.

## Discussion

The study found a highly significant and positive relationship between distributive justice on job performance. This outcome implies that Lecturers who perceive fairness in the allocation of rewards, responsibilities, and recognition are more likely to be committed, motivated, and perform effectively. This implies that employees who perceive fairness in the allocation of rewards, responsibilities, and recognition are more likely to be committed, motivated, and perform effectively. This outcome is consistent with several empirical studies and theoretical propositions that have examined the impact of distributive justice on workplace outcomes across different contexts.

Rahma, Tjahjono, and Rahayu (2024) provide strong support for this finding through a global metaanalysis of 107 documents spanning 2014–2023. Their work highlights a clear trend: distributive justice is a crucial determinant of employee engagement and operational effectiveness. The study emphasizes that organizations with fair distribution mechanisms create an environment that supports high performance, employee participation, and organizational efficiency. The increase in research attention between 2020 and 2024 further underscores the growing recognition of distributive justice as a cornerstone of employee performance.

Similarly, Krishnan et al. (2018) observed that among all forms of organizational justice, distributive justice was the strongest predictor of employees' job performance. Their study, conducted using SPSS analysis on data from 142 respondents, reinforces the idea that perceived fairness in outcomes (such as pay, promotion, and workload) directly enhances employee productivity.



In the Nigerian context, this study aligns with the results of Tyokosu, Emakwu, and Ejoha (2020), who found that all three types of justice, distributive, procedural, and interpersonal, were significantly related to teachers' job performance. Although procedural justice emerged as the strongest predictor in their case, distributive justice still showed a robust connection to performance outcomes.

Hyder et al. (2022) also substantiate this relationship in their study involving 402 medical doctors. They found that a well-functioning organizational justice system, inclusive of distributive justice, significantly boosts in-role performance. Their results suggest that fairness in the distribution of responsibilities, recognition, and compensation is integral to employee effectiveness, even in highly professionalized environments like healthcare.

Iliya and Pam (2023) offer a complementary yet nuanced view, showing that distributive justice has a negative and significant effect on deviant behaviour among academics. This implies that when distributive justice is upheld, negative behaviours are minimized, indirectly enhancing job performance and organizational harmony. It reinforces the current finding by suggesting that equitable reward systems do not only boost performance positively but also help in curbing counterproductive behaviours.

Further reinforcing this, Ogonu, Nwokah, and Acee-Eke (2019) found a significant correlation between distributive justice and customer post-complaint interactions in the fast food industry. While the focus was on customer behaviour rather than employee performance, the implication remains that perceived fairness influences how individuals (employees or customers) respond constructively; a finding that resonates with the current study's results.

However, it is essential to contrast these affirmations with the findings of Jayus et al. (2021), who found that distributive justice had no significant effect on teacher engagement in Tangerang, Turkey. This divergence may be attributed to contextual factors such as cultural values, administrative practices, or the existing reward system in the educational sector of that region. Engagement and performance, though related, are distinct constructs; hence, while distributive justice may not have enhanced engagement, it could still influence performance in other ways. This highlights the importance of contextual variables in interpreting justice-performance relationships.

Although Agu (2020) focused on procedural justice and employee engagement, his findings reinforce the idea that justice in general plays a pivotal role in employee outcomes. Although distributive justice was not directly studied, the broader theme supports the idea that justice-oriented organizational environments promote engagement and, by extension, performance.



## **Conclusion**

The findings of this study suggest that the adoption of management practices grounded in principles of distributive justice can significantly enhance the productivity of university lecturers, elevate their morale, and promote positive manifestations of organisational citizenship behaviour. Moreover, the research underscores that employees' perceptions of fairness transcend mere theoretical or abstract organisational principles; rather, they serve as critical drivers of tangible, quantifiable improvements in performance outcomes. In the context of Nigeria's education sector, characterised by intense competition and limited resources, particularly within public institutions, the systematic integration of justice-oriented frameworks into human resource policies and managerial approaches may represent a pivotal mechanism for augmenting operational efficiency and overall productivity.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following actionable recommendations are proposed to enhance job performance through improved organisational justice practices: Stateowned University managements should establish clear criteria for rewards and ensure that lecturers perceive reward allocation as fair. Distributive Justice can be strengthened by aligning rewards with measurable performance indicators and openly communicating the basis for such allocations.



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