

PAY RISE AND EMPLOYEE PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN INSURANCE COMPANIES IN RIVERS STATE.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between pay rise and employee prosocial behavior, focusing on altruism, empathy, and civic virtue, within insurance companies in Rivers State, Nigeria. Using a correlational research design, data were collected through structured questionnaire distributed to employees across selected insurance firms in Rivers State, with a population of 436 employees. The sample size of 209 employees was determined using the Taro Yamene formula. The Kendall test statistic was used to test the hypotheses raised through the use of the statistical package for social sciences, version 25. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between pay rise and the three indicators of prosocial behaviour. Specifically, employees who received regular and fair pay increases demonstrated higher levels of altruistic actions, empathetic responses to colleagues, and active participation in organizational citizenship activities. The study concluded that pay rise serves as a critical motivator for enhancing positive workplace behaviours and recommends the adoption of transparent and equitable compensation practices to sustain employee engagement and organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: Pay rise, prosocial behaviour, altruism, empathy, civic virtue

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary organizational theory, prosocial behaviour—actions performed to benefit others or the organization as a whole—has emerged as a pivotal driver of cooperation, innovation, and service quality. In the high-stakes environment of insurance companies, prosocial behaviour among employees can manifest in teamwork, exceptional customer

service, and a willingness to go above and beyond role boundaries—qualities that foster trust and competitive advantage in a customer-centric industry. Though the specific term prosocial behaviour is under-researched in Nigerian insurance sectors, related constructs—particularly affective and normative commitment stemming from compensation—offer useful insights. For example, Nwaiwu & Onuoha (2020) found a significant positive relationship between compensation and workers' affective and continuance commitment in oil servicing companies in Rivers State; offerings that resonate with care and fairness tend to elevate employees' commitment to organizational goals. Similarly, in non-academic staff at Rivers State universities, Jukume, Oparanma, & Tamunomiebi (2020) observed that base pay significantly predicted workers' commitment. These commitment dimensions can fuel prosocial behaviours by nurturing an intrinsic alignment with organizational success.

When prosocial behaviours are lacking, particularly within insurance companies, organizations risk diminished customer satisfaction, internal cooperation, and ultimately, competitiveness. While direct studies in the insurance industry are limited, analogous evidence suggests that poor motivation — tied to insufficient compensation or recognition — dampens productivity, engagement, and innovation. For instance, Richard, Kalu, & Gabriel (2023) documented that robust financial, fringe, and non-financial compensation strongly correlates with employee productivity in Rivers State manufacturing firms. Extrapolating, inadequate compensation in insurance firms could similarly weaken performance and undermine prosocial efforts. Moreover, in Rivers State's local government service, Wilson (2021) highlighted that timely financial incentives—including salary increases—are significantly linked to staff productivity. In insurance, delays or insufficiency in pay rises may erode morale, encourage self-interested behaviour, and compromise collaborative and customer-oriented actions.

While direct definitions in Nigerian corporate studies are lacking, the academic consensus defines employee prosocial behaviour as discretionary actions by employees intended to benefit coworkers, the organization, or external stakeholders—often outside formal role requirements. A proximate concept—employee innovativeness in Rivers State insurance companies—is defined by Ojo, Amadi, & Ngwiate (2022) as engagement in idea generation, promotion, and realization (administrative or technological innovation). Though innovation is not synonymous with prosocial behaviour, both reflect voluntary, organization-oriented efforts. Another theoretical frame suggests that incentives can reinforce prosocial behaviour depending on prevailing social norms. This implies that compensation adjustments (like pay rises) might stimulate prosociality when aligned with a culture that values such conduct.

Empirical Nigerian studies have not directly tested the link between pay rise and prosocial behaviour in insurance. However, broader findings illustrate that compensation is a motivating force for desirable behaviours. Nwaiwu & Onuoha (2020) found that compensation positively influences organizational commitment (affective and continuance), mechanisms that often underpin prosocial behaviour. Jukume et al. (2020) similarly demonstrated that base pay correlates with employee commitment among non-academic staff. Wilson (2021) established that increased basic salary and other financial incentives boost productivity in Rivers State governmental contexts. In manufacturing, Richard et al. (2023) provided evidence that financial and non-financial benefits improve productivity. From these, one can infer that a well-structured pay rise—as a form of compensation enhancement—could plausibly enhance prosocial behaviour by elevating commitment, motivation, and job satisfaction.

Within human resource and compensation literature, a pay rise refers to an increase in an employee's base salary or earnings, often reflecting performance, inflation, or retention considerations. Pay rises represent a form of extrinsic reward designed to motivate, recognize, and retain employees. In Nigerian academia, compensation broadly encompasses salary

increases, fringe benefits, and bonuses—each serving as motivational levers (e.g., Richard et al., 2023; Wilson, 2021). Though compensation-related studies abound in Rivers State across oil servicing, manufacturing, banking, local government, and universities, there remains a clear gap: no known empirical study between 2019–2025 has explicitly examined how pay rise influences employee prosocial behaviour within insurance companies in Rivers State. Studies in insurance firms address management development and innovativeness (Ojo et al., 2022) and workers' efficiency—but none link pay rise to prosocial outcomes. Related compensation studies in other sectors (oil servicing, banking, local government) underscore impacts on commitment, productivity, and job satisfaction—but do not extend to insurance or to prosocial constructs. Recognizing this research void lays the groundwork for future empirical exploration—perhaps via surveys, interviews, or behavioral experiments—into the interplay between compensation enhancements and prosocial outcomes in insurance firms. Unveiling this link holds promise not only for academic advancement but for guiding practitioners toward compensation strategies that do more than retain staff—they transform organizational culture.

The purpose of this study was therefore to examine the relationship between pay rise and employee prosocial behaviour in insurance companies in Rivers State. The following objectives will be met by this paper;

- i. To examine how pay rise relates to employee altruism in insurance companies in Rivers State.
- ii. To investigate the relationship between pay rise and employee empathy in insurance companies in Rivers State.
- iii. To assess the relationship between pay rise and employee civic virtue in insurance companies in Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework

This study will examine the relationship between the two variables as conceptualized below.

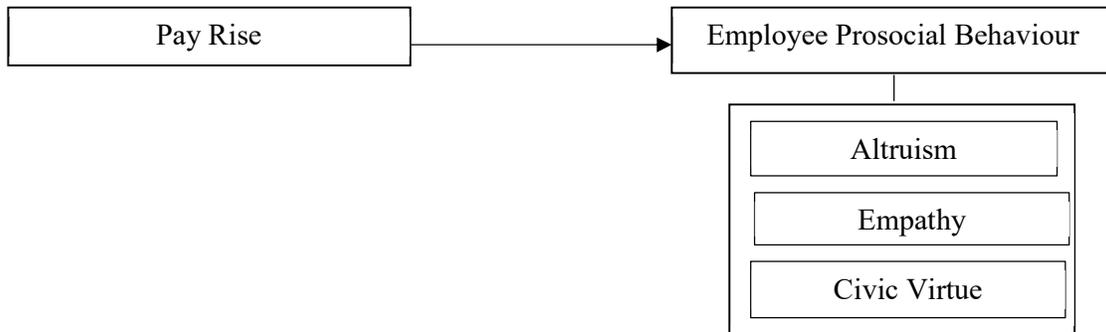


Figure 1: Relationship between Pay rise and Employee Prosocial Behaviour

Source: Desk Research (2025)

Research Questions

The following questions were developed as a guide for this research:

- i. Howt does pay rise relate to employee altruism in insurance companies in Rivers State?
- ii. How does pay rise relate to employee empathy in insurance companies in Rivers State?
- iii. What is the relationship between pay rise and employee civic virtue in insurance companies in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated specifically for this study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between pay rise and employee altruism in insurance companies in Rivers State.

H₀₂: Pay rise does not significantly relate to employee empathy in insurance companies in Rivers State.

H₀₃: Pay rise has no significant relationship with the civic virtue of employees in the insurance industry in Rivers State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory (SET) was initially propounded by sociologist George Homans in the 1950s and later expanded by Peter Blau in the 1960s. The core idea of the theory is that human relationships are formed and maintained based on reciprocal exchanges of resources, which can include material goods, services, or social support. Homans (1958) postulated that interactions are governed by the costs and benefits perceived by the parties involved. Blau (1964) further developed this idea, emphasizing that the exchanges in social relationships are not always tangible or immediate and may involve psychological benefits such as trust and respect. SET is grounded in the belief that individuals engage in behavior that maximizes their rewards while minimizing costs, creating a balance that ensures mutual benefit in the relationship. Conversely, negative or imbalanced exchanges can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction, disengagement, and reduced job performance (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

A study by Akinsola et al. (2023) examined how motivational strategies, such as salary satisfaction, benefits, and career development opportunities, influence employees' perceptions of fairness and their subsequent engagement in prosocial behaviors in Nigerian banks. The study revealed that when employees feel that their rewards are justly allocated, they tend to reciprocate by helping their colleagues and taking on tasks beyond their formal job responsibilities. Similarly, in their study, Orenuga et al. (2024) investigated how employee empowerment, a component often associated with reward systems, enhances the quality of exchanges between employees and organizations. They found that when employees are empowered through meaningful rewards and recognition, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that support both organizational goals and the well-being of their coworkers. These prosocial behaviors were linked to perceptions of equitable treatment, reinforcing the principles of SET.

The Concept of Pay Rise

One widely accepted definition of a pay rise is provided by Karikari and Boateng (2020), who define it as “an increase in an employee’s wages or salary, which may result from performance evaluation, inflation, or changes in company or economic conditions.” This definition emphasizes the multifaceted reasons behind pay rises, highlighting performance-based increments as well as external factors such as inflation and broader economic shifts. According to Karikari and Boateng, the main purpose of a pay rise is to reward employees for their contributions while keeping compensation competitive with market standards. In a similar vein, Choi and Cho (2021) define pay rises as “adjustments to employee wages based on merit, length of service, and organizational financial health, often tied to formal performance appraisal systems.” This definition incorporates merit-based pay increases, which are typically linked to the outcomes of performance reviews. Choi and Cho's work focuses on the organizational impact of pay rises, suggesting that they serve as both a reward for past performance and a motivator for future contributions. Their study emphasizes the importance of a transparent and fair performance evaluation process in determining the amount of pay increase. According to Akinbode and Adebayo (2023), pay rises in Nigeria are primarily influenced by individual performance, organizational profitability, and inflation rates. Their research indicates that while performance-based increases are common, economic factors such as inflation and fluctuations in market conditions significantly affect the frequency and magnitude of salary adjustments.

The Concept of Employee Prosocial Behaviour

Orokwo (2021) defines employee prosocial behavior as actions that foster collaborative environments through mechanisms like open communication and decision-making participation. This approach reflects an emphasis on collective work culture, where joint consultation practices in Nigerian organizations, especially in the hospitality sector, enhance prosocial tendencies by fostering trust and employee involvement. Here, prosocial actions are seen as integral to workplace dynamics, influencing factors like job satisfaction and retention in high-interaction sectors (Orokwo, 2021). Similarly, research by Kim and Qu (2020) examines prosocial behavior through the lens of social exchange relationships, suggesting that gratitude and obligation play essential mediating roles in encouraging prosocial actions. Their study in the hospitality industry found that employees are motivated to engage in prosocial behavior due to feelings of gratitude towards colleagues and customers, as well as a sense of obligation fostered by supportive relationships (Kim & Qu, 2020).

Overall, Nigerian studies in recent years frame prosocial behavior as a vital component of a productive organizational climate, where emotional and social factors drive employees to engage in beneficial behaviors for the organization and its members (Orokwo, 2021; Kim & Qu, 2020). These behaviors often overlap with organizational citizenship behaviors, which include helping coworkers, going beyond job requirements, and contributing positively to the company’s goals. Freidlin and Littman-Ovadia (2020) highlight prosocial behavior in terms of “character strengths,” emphasizing that these behaviors are inherently positive and contribute to both individual and organizational success. They suggest that prosocial actions are manifestations of character strengths that are linked to moral values and are critical for sustaining organizational culture. Such behaviors include helping colleagues, volunteering for additional tasks, and providing support during challenges, all aimed at benefiting both coworkers and the organization as a whole.

Measures of Employee Prosocial Behaviour

Altruism

A key definition of employee altruism in Nigeria is provided by Okafor and Olatunji (2020), who describe it as “voluntary, selfless actions by employees that are intended to benefit others in the organization, without any expectation of external rewards.” This definition emphasizes the selflessness intrinsic to altruistic behavior. Okafor and Olatunji suggest that altruism in the Nigerian workplace is often motivated by cultural values such as communalism, which promotes helping others as part of a collective responsibility. They argue that in Nigeria, employees often engage in altruistic behavior as a means of fostering goodwill and building strong social relationships at work, which ultimately enhances team collaboration and organizational success. A study by Akinlabi and Ajayi (2021) expands on this by defining employee altruism as “voluntary acts that go beyond formal job responsibilities, where employees demonstrate kindness, empathy, and assistance to their colleagues, contributing to a positive and supportive work environment.” Akinlabi and Ajayi focus on the interpersonal aspects of altruism, emphasizing that altruistic behaviors in Nigerian workplaces foster positive relationships among employees, enhance communication, and promote a collaborative atmosphere. They argue that employees in Nigeria are often more likely to help their colleagues because of the strong emphasis on social bonds and communal values that pervade the Nigerian workplace culture.

Empathy

Odugbesan-Omede (2018) emphasizes that empathy involves actively engaging with others' concerns, demonstrating genuine interest and respect. This perspective aligns with McPheat's (2018) view that social awareness, a component of emotional intelligence, includes understanding how others feel and validating those feelings. McPheat (2018) further notes that showing empathy can be challenging, especially during conflicts, but it is essential for effective interpersonal interactions. In the healthcare sector, Edosomwan et al. (2021) explore the relationship between supportive supervision and empathic behavior among public healthcare professionals. They define empathic behavior as the capacity to perceive and respond to patients' emotions and needs, which is crucial for quality patient care. Their study highlights that supportive supervision enhances empathic behavior, thereby improving healthcare delivery. Similarly, Owoicho et al. (2023) examine how emotional intelligence influences caring behavior among professional nurses in Benue State. They define caring behavior as actions that demonstrate concern and compassion for patients, which is closely linked to empathy. Their findings suggest that components of emotional intelligence, such as self-awareness and social awareness, significantly impact nurses' caring behaviors. Arimie (2020) discusses how effective employee relations, underpinned by empathy, can lead to improved organizational performance. He suggests that understanding and addressing employees' concerns fosters a positive work environment, which is essential for organizational success.

Civic Virtue

Employee civic virtue is commonly defined as employees' voluntary engagement in activities that support the organization's functioning and success. This includes behaviors such as attending meetings, staying informed about organizational issues, and participating in voluntary activities. Binuyo et al. (2020) define employee civic virtue as “the discretionary behaviors exhibited by employees that are not directly recognized by the formal reward system but collectively promote the effective functioning of the organization.” Their study emphasizes that such behaviors are crucial for organizational success, even though they may not be formally rewarded. Similarly, Deluga (1998) describes civic virtue as “subordinate

participation in organizational political life and supporting the administrative function of the organization." This perspective highlights the importance of employees' involvement in organizational processes and their support for management decisions. The role of employee civic virtue in enhancing organizational performance has been a focal point in Nigerian research. Binuyo et al. (2020) investigate how reward system dimensions influence employee civic virtue in selected insurance firms in Lagos State.

Pay Rise and Employee Prosocial Behaviour

A study by Nsirim (2024) examined the impact of collective bargaining on employee prosocial behavior in the hospitality sector in Port Harcourt. The research found a significant positive relationship between collective bargaining and prosocial behaviors, suggesting that when organizations engage in joint consultation practices, there is a notable improvement in prosocial behaviors among employees. This implies that financial incentives negotiated through collective bargaining can enhance prosocial behaviors in the workplace. Similarly, Ogunmakin and Sunday (2023) investigated the effect of financial incentives on employee morale and motivation in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Ekiti State. Their study revealed that merit pay and bonuses positively and significantly affect employee morale and motivation. While the research did not directly measure prosocial behaviors, the enhanced morale and motivation are likely to foster such behaviors, as motivated employees are more inclined to engage in prosocial activities.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the correlational research design. For this study, the population was four hundred and thirty-six (436) staff of Insurance firms in Rivers State and the sample size was 209 staff determined with the Taro Yamane's formula. The Kendall test statistic was used to test the hypotheses raised through the use of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS), version 25..

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Decision rule: Kendall's Tau-b is a nonparametric correlation coefficient used to measure the strength and direction of the association between two ordinal variables. It is particularly useful when dealing with ranked data or Likert-scale responses in management and social science research. When running Kendall's Tau-b in SPSS, the output typically includes: Kendall's Tau-b Value (τ_b): Ranges from -1 to +1, where: $\tau_b = +1$: Perfect positive correlation (as one variable increases, the other also increases). $\tau_b = -1$: Perfect negative correlation (as one variable increases, the other decreases). $\tau_b = 0$: No correlation (no relationship between the variables). Significance Level (Sig. or p-value): Indicates whether the correlation is statistically significant. If $p < 0.05$, the correlation is significant, meaning there is strong evidence of an association between the variables. If $p > 0.05$, the correlation is not statistically significant, suggesting that any observed relationship may be due to chance.

Table 1: Correlations matrix between pay rise and the measures of employee prosocial behaviour

			Pay Rise	Altruism	Empathy	Civic Virtue
Kendall's tau_b	Pay Rise	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.781**	.767**	.643**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	192	192	192	192
	Altruism	Correlation Coefficient	.781**	1.000	.785**	.655**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	192	192	192	192
	Empathy	Correlation Coefficient	.767**	.785**	1.000	.581**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	192	192	192	192
	Civic Virtue	Correlation Coefficient	.643**	.655**	.581**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	192	192	192	192

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Research Data, 2024

H01: There is no significant relationship between pay rise and employee altruism in the insurance industry in Rivers State.

The table 1 shows a positive and significant relationship between pay rise and employee altruism in the insurance industry in Rivers State with a Kendall value of 0.781. This indicates that there is a high strength in correlation between both variables. This shows a strong relationship between pay rise and employee altruism in the insurance industry in Rivers State. However, since the probability statistics shows a value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, at 95% confidence interval for which the calculations were made, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and its alternative form accepted. This states that “there is significant relationship between pay rise and employee altruism in the insurance industry in Rivers State”.

H02: There is no significant relationship between pay rise and employee empathy in the insurance industry in Rivers State.

The table 1 shows a positive and significant relationship between pay rise and employee empathy in the insurance industry in Rivers State with a Kendall value of 0.761. This indicates that there is a high strength in correlation between both variables. This shows a strong relationship between pay rise and employee empathy in the insurance industry in Rivers State. However, since the probability statistics shows a value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, at 95% confidence interval for which the calculations were made, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and its alternative form accepted. This states that “there is significant relationship between pay rise and employee empathy in the insurance industry in Rivers State”.

H03: There is no significant relationship between pay rise and employee civic virtue in the insurance industry in Rivers State.

The table 1 shows a positive and significant relationship between pay rise and employee civic virtue in the insurance industry in Rivers State with a Kendall value of 0.643. This indicates that there is a high strength in correlation between both variables. This shows a high relationship between pay rise and employee civic virtue in the insurance industry in Rivers State. However, since the probability statistics shows a value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05, at 95% confidence interval for which the calculations were made, therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and its alternative form accepted. This states that “there is significant relationship between pay rise and employee civic virtue in the insurance industry in Rivers State”.

Discussion of Findings

Pay Rise has a positive and significant relationship with the measures of prosocial behaviours. This covers hypotheses 1, 2 and 3. The findings indicate a positive relationship between increased compensation and the enhancement of these prosocial behaviours, aligning with existing literature on the subject. The study found that employees who received pay rises were more inclined to engage in altruistic behaviours, such as assisting colleagues and going beyond their formal job requirements. This supports the findings of Binuyo et al. (2020), who noted that reward systems in insurance firms can enhance employees' civic virtue behaviours, including altruism. Additionally, a global study by Harbaugh et al. (2023) found that higher income was associated with increased altruistic behaviours, such as donating money and helping strangers. Employees who perceived their pay as fair and equitable were more likely to exhibit empathy towards their colleagues, leading to improved interpersonal relationships and a supportive workplace culture. This is consistent with the work of Klimecki et al. (2016), who found that empathy induction substantially increased altruistic behaviour in economic interactions. Furthermore, Adeoye (2020) highlighted the role of compensation management in enhancing employee motivation and, by extension, prosocial behaviours such as empathy.

Pay rises were also found to encourage civic virtue behaviours, such as attending voluntary meetings and staying informed about company matters. Employees who felt adequately compensated were more engaged in organisational activities beyond their formal roles. This aligns with the study by Binuyo et al. (2020), which highlighted the role of reward systems in promoting civic virtue behaviours in insurance firms. The study concluded that fair and competitive compensation in promoting prosocial behaviours within the insurance industry in Rivers State. By offering pay rises, organisations can foster a more collaborative, empathetic, and engaged workforce, leading to improved organisational performance and employee satisfaction.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study revealed a positive relationship between pay rise and employee prosocial behaviour—specifically altruism, empathy, and civic virtue—in insurance companies in Rivers State. Findings suggest that financial incentives not only boost employee morale but also foster a more cooperative, empathetic, and civically engaged workforce.

Insurance companies in Rivers State should implement structured and transparent pay rise systems to reinforce and sustain prosocial behaviours among employees.

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