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The Review of Employee Rewards on Employee Motivation: Toxic Environment as a Moderating Variable

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Abstract

Research Aims: Employee rewards are a crucial tool for motivating employees and recognizing their contributions to the organization. However, organizations frequently overlook the elements (financial and non-financial rewards) that motivate employees. Most organizations lack the tools and tactics to motivate employees, and the worst part is that a toxic work environment demotivates employees. This study aims to investigate and understand how employees' rewards affect their motivation in a toxic environment as a moderating variable. Design/Methodology/Approach: Exploratory research was used to approach this review. The information was gathered from online publications, dissertations, online databases, and books relevant to the topic. Research Findings and Implications: Financial benefits are the most effective motivator for most employees; however, select individuals are driven by intrinsic rewards. Money alone is not always sufficient to motivate employees. A toxic workplace environment demotivates employees regardless of the rewards. Theoretical Contribution/Originality: The importance of this research study is that it expands on the substantial amount of literature that is currently accessible concerning how employee rewards affect employee motivation. Research Limitation: The study's boundaries were limited to secondary sources that were easily accessible online, the impact of employee rewards on motivation, and related issues. Secondary sources may occasionally be out of date or inaccurately reflect the most recent techniques or technological advancements in the sector.

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INTRODUCTION

As organizations have implemented reward systems, the advantages have been beneficial throughout the years. Organizations have expressed satisfaction with enhanced employee productivity, lower attrition rates, higher business commitment, employees' creativity and innovations, and stronger operational relations, and motivation between employees. Naturally, it is expected for organizations to cultivate wholesome and gratifying bonds with their

workforce (Marczak & Yawson, 2021:3). In addition to internal rewards like reaching an individual objective, independence, and greater work chances, rewards additionally incorporate extrinsic rewards like money and perks (Armstrong, 2010:40; Grobler et al., 2011:401). This study is guided by the Hay Group (2008) rewards system that encompasses extrinsic rewards (money assurance, variable salary, perks, and continuous rewards) and intrinsic rewards (environmental and employment ethos, guide and administration, professional advancement and progress, workplace education and advancement). Increasing employee motivation has a significant influence on increasing productivity and efficacy (Agrawal & Singhal, 2021:143). Motivation is the desire of an individual behaviour to accomplish the organization's objectives (Bastola, 2021:7; Skripak & Poff, 2020:203; Varma, 2017:11; Vrba, 2014:469). Overall motivation is evaluated by four factors in the workplace Nohria, Groysberg and Lee (2008): engagement: the drive, vigour, and endeavour employees bring to their employment; how much, in their opinion, the organization upholds their expectations for employment and upholds its express and implied promises; commitment: the degree to which employees participate in corporate citizenship activities and intention to quit: is the most accurate predictor of employee turnover.

Yet it is important to remember that, as social creatures, humans have a variety of demands and rarely behave with economic considerations in mind (Ozkeser, 2019:803). Interpersonal needs and desires, as well as factors inside and outside of one's own like corporate systems of rewards, can have an impact on someone's motivation (Werner, 2021:405). Employees react to rewards unevenly; hence, that which motivates an employee could exert minimal or no impact on other employees and could potentially be demoralizing according to Kiley (2018:145). The problem identified in this study is that most organizations lack a flexible reward system, and universal reward system without considering employees' individual needs and the toxic work environment effects on employee motivation. Employee motivation declines due to a toxic workplace environment. At the same time organizations, however, often miss the financial and non-financial rewards actors that drive employee motivation. Typically, most organizations lack the means and strategies to motivate employees as most organizations rely on or think that money motivates employees. Organizations create a reward system without considering employees' demands and needs. The objective of this study is to investigate and understand the relationships between the impact of employee rewards and toxic work environments on employee motivation. Organizations ought to have the ability to assess the inner motivation that employees get from their jobs and supplement it with outer rewards as needed.

The statement "a toxic work environment" is frequently heard. Even though the phrase is frequently used, little study has been done on toxic work environments (McCulloch, 2016). Thus, the research gap identified in this study is the impact of a toxic environment on the relationship between employee rewards and employee motivation. In a perfect workplace, every employee could thrive in courteous, uplifting, and supporting workplaces. But the truth is that certain settings at work can be toxic, depleting employees' motivation and energy (Saeed, 2023).

This study hypothesizes that: H1: Employee rewards affect employee motivation levels in the work environment. H2: A toxic environment moderates the relationship between employee rewards and employee motivation. In a nation like South Africa with a high unemployment rate of 34.20% in 2023, employees see money as a motivating element (Stats SA [Statistics South Africa]). As a component of pay, salary is the most significant compensation element and ranks highest as a motivating factor for employees (Colic, Arapovic & Mekic, 2022). Even while financial benefits are the most effective motivator for most employees, selecting individuals is driven by intrinsic rewards (Mdhlalose, 2022). Uzair and Mehmood (2021) argued that money alone is not always sufficient to stimulate excellent performance. By increasing views of a rewards programme's overall fairness, non-financial advantages would increase employee motivation.

Employee Motivation

According to Nel et al. (2008:347), an individual's level of motivation is contingent upon their conception of what constitutes motivation. The motivation issue begins with the basic overlap in interests among employees and organizations. Employees aim to increase their salary by exerting the least amount of effort necessary, on the contrary, organizations want their employees to put in a lot of effort and receive the lowest possible salary (Falk, 2014:2). Table 1 delineates the constructs of employee motivation.

The most crucial element in the expansion and success of an organization is employee motivation. Managers must understand what motivates the employees as well as how to maximize their output (Uzair & Mehmood, 2021:2404). Financial rewards are crucial for employee motivation (Abubakar et al., 2020). The combination of financial reward and proficiency improvement substantially upsurges self-governing motivation, which in turn decreases turnover intent (Mustafa & Ali, 2019). Kefay, Kero and Kumera's (2020) study

showed that employees are unsatisfied with compensation and neither pleased nor dissatisfied with fringe benefits pay. Therefore, the financial rewards factors (wage and perks) were not significant predictors of employee motivation.

Table 1: Constructs of Employee Motivation

Theory	Motivation Construct	Conceptual Definition
Self Determination Theory (SDT)	Intrinsic Motivation	Behaviours people engage in for their own sake – "for the pleasure and satisfaction derived from their performance" (Deci *et al.,* 1991:327). These behaviours are initiated out of innate curiosity, interest, and the will to learn new things, even when specific rewards are not present (Ryan & Deci, 2000).
	Avoidance	The conceptualization of avoidance motivation in this study is a combination of motivation from SDT and work avoidance from Goal Theory. Motivation "can be defined as a state in which individuals cannot perceive a relationship between their behaviour and that behaviour's subsequent outcome" (Legault, Green-Demers & Pelletier, 2006:568). This perception can lead the individual towards exhibiting work avoidance goals and behaviours, such that they "deliberately avoid engaging in academic tasks or attempt to minimize the effort required to complete academic tasks" (Dowson & McInerney, 2001:36).
Social-Cognitive Theory	Self-Efficacy	Self-efficacy can be described as "people's beliefs in their capability to exercise some measure of control over their functioning and environmental events" (Bandura, 2001:10). In the context of literature, self-efficacy is described as "beliefs regarding ability and proficiency in reading tasks" (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995:154).
	Perceived Difficulty	A person's perception of the task's difficulty affects their ability to express views, according to Bandura's theory. Those who perceive reading as challenging are described as, "beliefs that reading activities are hard, or problematic" (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995:154).
Social Goals	Pro-social Goals	Objectives allude to "what an individual wants to achieve in a particular situation" (Wentzel, Filisetti & Looney, 2007:896). This notion suggests that pro-social objectives in educational settings represent the preferences of the pupils. "To help, cooperate, and follow rules in the classroom" (Wentzel et al., 2007:896).
	Pro-social Interactions	Pro-social relationships were inherently studied in this investigation as pro-social aspirations. These encounters involved the following goals and behaviours: discussing consuming literature, expressing enthusiasm for the books that fellow students and peers are currently reading, and lending a hand to acquaintances and pupils who need assistance with learning.
	Antisocial Goals	Expanding upon our knowledge of pro-social aims, we identify an unfriendly pupil as someone who triggers mockery of fellow pupils' reading-related remarks and

	Antisocial Interactions	thoughts, attempts to prevent assisting other pupils, and attempts not to interact with other pupils. This research looked at antisocial relationships as directly as antisocial aims. During these exchanges, there were three wants and behaviours expressed: mocking other pupils' and acquaintances' attitudes on reading, showing disrespect for them, and persuading them that consuming literature is an inefficient use of leisure.

Source: Coddington (2009)

It is not immediately clear that external rewards kill off internal drives (Ledford, Gerhart & Fang, 2013:18). Motivation from outside sources may be counterproductive, as shown by the many ideas summarized in Table 2. Ledford et al. (2013:28) asserted that the social context in which a reward is given affects its outcomes. If the incentive is well-designed, it should increase intrinsic motivation rather than decrease it, which will increase its impact compared to when it just relies on extrinsic drive. There are four drives encoded into our minds, their satisfaction has an immediate impact on our feelings and, therefore, our conduct (Nohria, Groysberg & Lee, 2008:2).

Table 2: Concepts Regarding Extrinsic Rewards' Impact on Internal Motivation

Theory	**Key Reference**	**Major Claims Concerning Effects of Extrinsic Rewards**
Cognitive Evaluation Theory	Deci and Ryan (1985)	Extrinsic rewards can impede intrinsic motivation under some circumstances
Attribution Theory / The justification Effect	Lepper, Greene and Nisbett (1973)	Extrinsic rewards have the potential to reduce intrinsic motivation
Self-Determination Theory	Gagné and Deci (2005)	Extrinsic rewards have the potential to increase intrinsic motivation in some situations
General Interest Theory	Eisenberger, Pierce and Cameron (1999)	Extrinsic rewards may, under some circumstances, increase intrinsic motivation
Motivation Crowding Theory	Frey and Jegan (2001)	Extrinsic motivation derived from rewards has the potential to overshadow intrinsic motivation

Source: Ledford et al. (2013:19)

Nohria et al. (2008:2) state that there are four motivating factors underlying motivation and they are discussed as follows: The drive to acquire: Everyone is motivated to obtain scarce items that enhance their feeling of well-being. Humans feel happiness when this desire is satisfied and displeasure when it is frustrated. This phenomenon applies to tangible items like food, clothes, housing, and wealth, but also to situations such as travelling and amusement,

neither include activities that boost social standing, such as receiving a promotion, a private office, or a seat on the organization board; the drive to bond: Humans are the only species to extend this tie to bigger collectives, such as organizations, groups, and countries. When the impulse to connect is satisfied, it is related to good feelings such as love and care, and when it is not, it is linked with adverse emotions such as solitude and apathy. When employees are happy to be a part of the organization, they experience a significant increase in motivation, yet when the organization fails them, they experience a significant decrease; in the drive to comprehend: Typically, humans are energized by the task of figuring out solutions and irritated when situations appear to lack logic. At the job, the urge to make a significant effort is driven by the need to grasp. Employees are motivated by occupations that provide them with opportunities for growth and learning, while they are disheartened by ones that seem routine or lead to a dead end. Brilliant people who feel surrounded typically quit their organizations to find other trials elsewhere and the drive to defend themselves: Humans all instinctively protect themselves, their possessions and achievements, friends, and family as well as our views and beliefs from external dangers. This motivation derives from the fundamental fight-or-flight reaction seen in all animals. In humans, it emerges not just as aggressive or protective behaviour, but also as a yearning to construct organizations that promote justice, that have clear aims and intents, and that let individuals express their thoughts and beliefs. Satisfying the need to protect gives a sense of safety and assurance, but failing to do so generates anxiety and anger.

Basic Emotional Needs/Drives

While satisfying the four fundamental emotional needs of employees is vital for any organization, Nohria et al. (2008:3) study indicates that each need is best served by a separate organizational lever, see Table 3. Organizations do not have a stranglehold on employee motivation or on satisfying the emotional needs of individuals. As important are the employees' views of their immediate supervisors. Individuals know that a variety of organizational elements, of which some are beyond their manager's control, impact their motivation, yet they evaluate their supervisor's capacity to keep them motivated with caution (Nohria et al., 2008:4).

Table 3: Four Basic Emotional Needs/Drives

Drive	Primary Lever	Actions

Acquire	Reward System	• Sharply differentiate good performers from average and poor performers • Tie rewards clearly to performance • Pay as well as your competitors
Bond	Culture	• Foster mutual reliance and friendship among coworkers • Value collaboration and teamwork • Encourage sharing of best practices
Comprehend	Job Design	• Design jobs that have distinct and important roles in the organization • Design jobs that are meaningful and foster a sense of contribution to the organization
Defend	Performance-Management and Resource-Allocation Processes	• Increase the transparency of all processes • Emphasize their fairness • Build trust by being just and transparent in granting rewards, assignments, and other forms of recognition

Source: Nohria et al. (2008:4)

Finance or pay the kind of rewards provided to employees to boost their need for performance, the need for work connections, and the need for willpower. Providing financial rewards serves as a foundation upon which employees may enhance their performance in the workplace, boost their drive to accomplish objectives, raise their standard of living, and strengthen their work motivation to reach their full potential (Novianty & Evita, 2018:7). Noor et al. (2020), are of the view that most employees believe that inadequate reward systems are to blame for low motivation on the job. There is a cascade of negative effects that stem from low levels of motivation within the job, including increased absenteeism, falling productivity, shrinking profitability, and so on. Employees believe that financial rewards, public acclaim, and career advancement opportunities may boost their motivation. In addition, the findings highlighted the fact that the employees needed more than simply better compensation systems; they also deserved to be recognized for the value they brought to the organization, something that was given less weight by management.

METHOD

This review was approached using an exploratory research strategy. Exploratory research aims to find both recognized and unidentified elements and assess pre-existing theories (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). When you want to learn more about an issue, subject, or occurrence but lack knowledge of the entirety of it, exploratory research might be useful. Internet publications, dissertations, internet-based resources, and books pertinent to the subject under study were used to source the content. Secondary research is a compilation of earlier studies on the same topic into a logical whole (Babbie, 2005:288). To deepen our understanding of a topic and uncover novel perspectives, secondary sources evaluate or argue the significance and setting behind primary materials (Davis, 2007:33; Dolowitz et al., 2008:90).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Empirical Review Modern

Employee Rewards

Non-financial rewards are crucial to motivation, yet they do not affect productivity in any way. While there is no causal link between non-financial rewards (the predictor variable) and the outcome (performance), these benefits nonetheless influence human situations. “Efficient nonfinancial rewards have a favourable effect on staff motivation” (Mohammed, Sebyala & Micheal, 2019). Most employees are motivated by financial gain (Kiley, 2018:145). Maslow’s (1954) needs hierarchy theory, it is only when money is used to acquire a need that it becomes a source of motivation. The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) (2015) acknowledges that financial compensation is not the primary factor in determining behaviour. Armstrong and Murlis (2007:345) concur that employees should be rewarded in more ways than just financially. To sum up, financial compensation is meaningless if employees are dissatisfied with their work, do not receive intrinsic rewards, and get no satisfaction from it themselves as this will lead to poor performance (Kiley, 2018:145). Herzberg’s two-factor theory states that Pay, perks, working conditions, and business regulations are all examples of extrinsic rewards that do not motivate employees but rather raise employee performance to an appropriate standard (Herzberg et al., 1959). However, Lawler (1996:207) reasons that if financial rewards may lead to aberrant behaviour, then they must also have an impact on employee performance. Lawler (1996:207) further argues that poorly designed compensation

structures fail to encourage, or rather, incentivize the incorrect kinds of behaviour. Landry and Whillans (2019) emphasize that workplace reward satisfaction is generally linked to greater fulfilment of employees' psychological demands for competency, independence, and belongingness. Using rewards to promote mental well-being and motivation, as well as increase productivity and loyalty in the workplace, is a powerful strategy when these demands are met.

The study's ultimate finding was that learning, career development, and work-life balance are effective strategies for management to utilize to motivate employees (Wachira, Wanjiku & Odiko, 2020). Riyanto et al. (2021) study confirms that among young employees in the organization, financial rewards have a good effect on job satisfaction, but non-financial rewards also have a beneficial effect. Work motivation has a favourable effect on young employees' job happiness. Employees have a neutral attitude toward choosing non-financial rewards, meaning they have neither concurred with the decision nor disapproved of it. The topic of acknowledgement had the greatest level of employee agreement, indicating that employees regularly get praise for their contributions to their businesses. Some non-financial benefits include scheduling flexibility, possibilities for advancement, performance reviews, endorsement, emancipation, a challenging workplace environment, and job control. The fact that these non-financial benefits are more frequently on the side of a memorandum of understanding than dispute shows that the organizations are gratifying and rewarding their employees by offering them (Akbar et al., 2018). Increasing employee motivation using non-financial benefits can help you manage your team more successfully. Employee happiness and satisfaction are wonderful ideas to promote individual and organizational performance and make it possible for managers to accomplish their objectives (Kerdasi & Azam, 2021). Twinkle's (2022) findings support the assertions made by other academics that financial rewards alone are insufficient to motivate employees. Also, it is best to employ both financial and non-financial rewards to their full potential since, as they say, "Variety is the spice of life." The function, efficacy, and appropriateness of financial and non-financial rewards are different from one another. To accommodate the various requirements and interests of employees, a balance between financial and non-financial rewards should be found. As motivation is a complicated and individualized topic, there is no one optimum method for dealing with it.

Toxic work environment

According to Toxic (2016), the term "toxic" designates something that is "very severe, nefarious or destructive" in addition to having or being a poisonous substance, particularly if liable for inflicting mortality or major impairment. Oral and behavioural harassment, bodily aggressiveness, sexual assault, and predatory behaviour are examples of toxic, damaging, and bad behaviours. Decreased morale among employees in toxic environments frequently results in job discontent and decreased motivation (Vaid, 2023). Employees tend to be motivated to give their best work when they are appreciated, endorsed, and supported. On the other hand, a poisonous or unfavourable workplace culture may demotivate employees. Employees might think they are underappreciated, under-supported, and devalued in such a setting. This may result in decreased motivation. Employees may get disinterested in their jobs in such a situation, which could have a bad effect on the organization (Bhat & Patni, 2023). If managers practice discriminatory behaviours, like prejudiced appointments or rewards, it can lead to animosity and feelings of disparities between employees. This may culminate in greater amounts of stress/burnout, less output and efficiency, impeded growth in their careers, and larger resignations (Perna, 2023).

According to the Oak Engage (2023) survey, 75% of employees in the United Kingdom acknowledge having dealt with a toxic atmosphere at work, and 83% of these employees described their experiences as negative. Oak Engage polled participants to find out who they thought was mostly to blame for toxic work environments. Toxic cultures were determined as being the fault of 33% of managers in middle management and 28% of all employees, with administration accounting for 27.5%. A startling 81% of employees concurred that administrators and managers who do not have humanity are frequently to blame for toxic working climates. Employees who experience this absence of humanity feel devalued and uncorroborated which eventually adds to a hostile work environment. Eighty-seven percent of employees concur that their psychological well-being has suffered because of a toxic culture in the workplace. seventy-three percent of employees concur that their sense of burnout is being exacerbated by a hostile working culture. To escape unfavourable workplace cultures, 71% of employees acknowledged that they are inclined to operate from the house. sixty-one percent of employees have quit because of problems with the organization's culture. Semedo et al. (2022) found that amotivation and centralized legislation (extraneous work motivation) have a greater connection with personality types that exhibit greater quantities of toxic leadership aspects.

This study was limited to online available secondary resources, effects of employee rewards on employee motivation and related topics. Secondary sources can occasionally not be up to date or accurately represent the most contemporary methods or developments in the industry. Rewards may be utilized inside an organization to encourage cultural values and excellent behaviour. Rewarding performance goals or behaviours that support the goals of the organization is one of the most successful methods to employ rewards. The death of internal drives by external rewards is not readily apparent. Since rewards from outside stimuli may be counterproductive, they should increase intrinsic motivation rather than decrease it, making the reward impact larger than if it relied only on extrinsic drive. Employees desire to be recognized beyond improved remuneration methods; additionally, they demand to be acknowledged for the worth that they delivered to the organization, which management placed less emphasis on. Management must enhance their organizations' rewards programmes by analysing and understanding each employee's particular demands. In many organizations, a large proportion of employees had little prior knowledge of the rewards system, and even fewer had gotten immediate input on their rewards system. Organizations must encourage employees to take part in the creation of a reward system in their organization. Such created reward systems will directly talk to both employee needs and organizational strategies.

Organizations must train managers and employees on professionalism, fairness, positivity, and workplace cultures and create a positive workplace environment. Managers or employees that practice toxicity on other employees should be dealt with immediately. If employees are not content with their jobs, do not obtain intrinsic rewards, and do not derive enjoyment from them, this will result in low performance, making financial remuneration useless. Financial rewards are no longer the primary motivators for employees; therefore, they require an additional benefit in the form of rewards that are not financial. Two types of rewards influence employee motivation and commitment: financial and non-financial rewards. Thus, commitment increases motivation. Engagement of employees also serves as a bridge between financial and non-financial benefits. Employees could be motivated if non-financial rewards were provided, and therefore, they were going to be trustworthy and dedicated to the organization, hence improving performance. Since employees' needs are different and motivated differently organizations should study their employees and create a rewards programme that considers the requirements of the employees and aligns with the goals, operation, and visualization of the organization.

CONCLUSION

Except for pay development, all entire reward system components under the topic of rewards and perks are seen as hygiene components, which means that their absence results in emotions of discontent rather than motivation. Financial benefits are the most effective motivator for most employees, however select individuals are driven by intrinsic rewards. Money alone is not always sufficient to stimulate excellent performance. Increasing views of a rewards programme's overall fairness, non-financial advantages and a positive workplace environment would increase employee motivation. When money is utilized to meet a need, it becomes a motivator, however in a toxic work environment money and other rewards end up becoming insignificant to employees due to stress, lack of happiness and negativity. Employees may be offered major financial benefits such as bonuses, compensation for overtime, as well as expenses of living adjustments. Perna (2023) states that employees must remember that their psychological and physical wellness ought to always priority first and that working in a profession or compensation cannot be placed at the price of someone's good health.

Employees, on the other hand, prioritize job security, recognition, and a pleasant office environment over financial remuneration. Employee motivation increases productivity, engagement, efficiency, and effectiveness for the organization. Employee motivation also improves individual performance. Factors that motivate employees are the workplace environment, profit-sharing, recognition, team cohesion, and unity, which constitute the cause of motivation of the employees that create the longing for employment. Employees value recognition and appreciation more than financial bonuses or other rewards and employees value holiday rewards and rewards more than other intrinsic benefits. Most employees appear to be not happy with their jobs, work environment, colleagues, and the organization's rewards due to a toxic work environment. Employees respond to rewards differently, so what drives one person may have little to no effect on others and can be discouraging as employees' needs are unique. At the same time, employees are discouraged and demotivated in their workplace.

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