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Intrinsic Reward and Employee Engagement of Fast Food Firms in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract: This study examined the relationship between intrinsic reward and employee engagement of fast food firms in rivers state, Nigeria. The survey design was adopted and a population of 138 employees of 12 selected fast food firms in Rivers State were covered. A sample of 103 was drawn from the population. Copies of questionnaire were administered to respondents in gathering data for the study and the systematic sampling technique was utilized. The data were analyze using Spearman Rank Order Correlation so as to ascertain the relationship between the dimensions of intrinsic reward (autonomy and recognition) with the measures of employee engagement (vigour and dedication). The outcome of the analysis showed a significant and positive relationship between intrinsic reward and employee engagement. The study concluded that intrinsic reward in terms of autonomy and recognition play a vital role in organization which thus help boost the engagement of the employees. It was recommended that employees should be allowed to work independently with less supervision in the fast food firms as such will enhance their vigour.

Keywords: Intrinsic Reward, Employee Engagement, Autonomy, Recognition, Vigour Dedication

1.0 Introduction

Attracting highly talented employees and retaining them in the organization has been a subject of discuss over the years. However, enhancing the engagement of these retailed talented employees is another issue organization are faced with over the years. Engagement is a key concept in organization because of its ability in positively enhancing the fortune of the organization. Employee engagement donate a bond employee have with the organization they work for and this bond can either be a tight bond or loosed bond. It is said to be a tight bond when the employee engagement is very high and a loosed bond when the engagement is low. Irrespective of the level of the engagement, such could have several impacts on the wellbeing and success of the organization. Akhigbe and Osita-Ejikeme (2021) noted that the need towards addressing the engagement of employees has become more essential considering the increasing rate of mobility of labour which has intensified talent drain in many firms.

In the opinion of Khalid, Butt and Satti (2021), employee engagement is vital in attaining and maintaining competitive edge of firms in the business domain. There is an increasing awareness

of more favourable opportunities in the business domain and this availability of opportunities have drawn the attention of the employees owing to the desire of achieving a more "greener pasture". Employees are key asst of all organization and the extent to which they have a vested effort in enhancing the firms fortune is dependent on their level of engagement. The above assertion concurred with the argument of Vandana *et al.* (2021) where they maintained that employee engagement plays a vital role in enhancing the goal attainment of firms and it is pertinent for all corporate entities that wishes to stay agile in the competitive world. Sarangi and Nayak (2016) maintained that an engaged worker has broad knowledge of the business context and they work earnestly with colleagues to boost the performance and wellbeing of the organization.

Employee engagement can be defined as an employee's high level of involvement and bond with the organization (Saks, 2006). Employee engagement can be defined as the positive and fulfilling state of mind of employees in the organization which is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption (De-la-calle-Duran & Rodriguez-Sanchez, 2021). Drawing from the above definition, the three measures of employee engagement are vigour, dedivcation and absorption. An employee that display high vigour in the workplace and also maintain high level of dedication and is absorbed in his duty is said to be engaged. However, the display of positive work attitude in organization can be influenced by the reward received by the employees in the workplace. Intrinsic reward has been recognized as a key factor that help in enhancing employee's outcome and attitude in the workplace. Intrinsic motivation is psychological in nature and they yield internal satisfaction to workers through satisfaction that are internally generated (Allen, Shore & Griffeth, 2004). Attitudes like self-esteem and citizenship behaviours can emanate from inward motivation which would most time give rise to high job performance which could possibly manifest in form of employee adaptability and high quality (Akhigbe, Ezebuiro & Akhigbe, 2020). Engagement has been a critical issue in organization and the need to enhance employee engagement has attracted several scholarly works (Hoole & Hotz, 2016; Konrad, 2006; Jayanto & Babbeth, 2021). There is however scanty empirical work that has examined the relationship between intrinsic reward and employee engagement of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria. this study is geared towards bridging this gap.

Statement of the Problem

Achieving and sustaining engagement of employees is very challenging in organization in present days and the fast food firms are not left behind. Employees consistently display low level of engagement in organization which has over the years reduced the quality of service delivered by the organization to their customers. Observation has revealed that many employees in the fast food firms display low engagement in their work place which has intensified customers dissatisfaction. Akhigbe and Osita-Ejikeme (2021) maintained that organizations are suffering the challenge of poor engagement of employees and this has posed a devastating effect on the wellbeing of many establishment. Clement and Eketu (2019) noted that low engagement can also manifest in low profitability, productivity and goal congruence in the organization. Flade (2003)

noted that over 80 percent British workers are not truly committed to their work, and a quarter of these are dissatisfied and 'actively disengaged. Similar problem is also witnessed among employees in the fast food firms. This study intend to address the issue of employee engagement from the standpoint of intrinsic reward.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives are to;

- i. Examine the relationship between autonomy and vigour of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- ii. Investigate the relationship between autonomy and dedication of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- iii. Examine the relationship between recognition and vigour of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.
- iv. Investigate the relationship between recognition and dedication of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions served as a guide in this study;

- i. What is the relationship between autonomy and vigour of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- ii. How does autonomy relate with dedication of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- iii. What is the relationship between recognition and vigour of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?
- iv. How does recognition relate with dedication of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated;

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between autonomy and vigour of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between autonomy and dedication of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between recognition and vigour of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

HO₄: There is no significant relationship between recognition and dedication of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

2.0 Review OF Related Literature

This work is based on self-determination theory. Self-determination theory (SDT) is a theory of fundamental psychological requirements in motivation, development, personality and wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017). It has gained a lot of traction as a method of motivating people all around the world and has been used in a variety of settings, including the workplace and other kinds of organisations. The theory is based on an organismic-dialectical meta-theory since it considers people to be dynamic organisms that integrate both internal and external psychological information in an effort to grow. SDT, then, is a motivational theory that investigates the relationship between our innate developmental tendencies and our external contexts. It is largely focused on a variety of psychological demands as well as the nature or type of motivation. SDT specifically distinguishes between controlled and autonomous motivation. People act with a complete feeling of willingness, volition, and choice when they are autonomously motivated. Contrarily, while under control, people behave in ways that imply compulsion, pressure, and demand. There has been a lot of SDT study done on the effects of autonomous versus regulated motives. Three fundamental and universal psychological requirements—the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness—have been described by SDT in addition to the differentiation of the sorts (i.e., qualities) of motivation. The fulfilment of innate wants has been shown to be a crucial component of optimal motivation, performance and health.

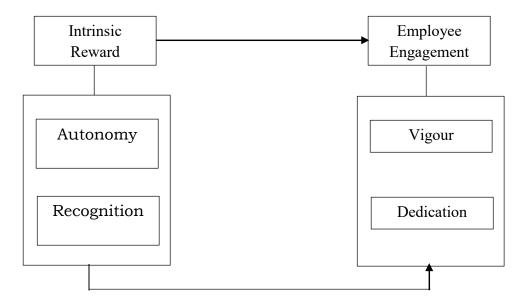


Figure 1: A conceptual framework showing the link between intrinsic reward and employee engagement.

Source: Adapted from Akhigbe Ezebuiro and Akhigbe (2020); De-la-calle-Duran & Rodriguez-Sanchez, (2021).

Intrinsic Reward

When discussing incentives given to employees of a company, the term "intrinsic rewards" is used. Employees that effectively complete their jobs or projects receive internal rewards known as intrinsic rewards. These incentives are based on an individual's effort and skills, and they are primarily psychological in nature. Employees are encouraged to keep improving and, where necessary, to adopt long-lasting behavioural adjustments by receiving intrinsic rewards, which generate a favourable emotional response (Ryan and Deci, 2020). For instance, after a work is effectively completed, one will frequently feel a sense of accomplishment and contentment. The employee is thus encouraged to carry out that task successfully going forward in order to reap the benefits of this intrinsic incentive. Being treated with respect by upper management and/or a variety of coworkers, developing oneself, gaining the trust and confidence of superiors, completing enjoyable tasks, feeling accomplished, continuously learning or expanding one's capabilities in a particular pitch, having the freedom to choose which tasks one performs, and finally becoming a team player are all examples of intrinsic workplace benefits (Stumpf, Tymon, Favorito, & Smith, 2013). Intrinsic rewards, according to Ajila and Abiola (2004), have a favourable and significant impact on an employee's performance inside a business. The findings also show that intrinsic rewards, such as career advancement, responsibility, recognition, and learning opportunities, have less of an impact on an employee's performance at work than extrinsic rewards, such as pay, bonuses, promotions, and benefits.

Autonomy

The degree of control that employees have over how "their tasks" are carried out is referred to as autonomy (Khoshnaw and Alavi, 2020). The effects of this factor can be profound and wideranging on a variety of organisational and behavioural aspects, including commitment, satisfaction, work-life balance, stress and burnout, engagement, and performance. Individual and team autonomy fosters ownership of results and boosts performance (Cordery et al., 2010; Zak, 2017). High locus of control employees are able to ask inquiries without facing repercussions, which enhances the calibre of output (Long, 2012). Hogan and Coote (2014) provide research that suggests employees who have autonomy exhibit greater tenacity in resolving issues with the projects they manage. Because it makes it harder to oversee personnel and may raise the likelihood that they would slack off, managers frequently fear giving up control to their staff (Spencer, 2003; Arocena et al., 2010). Yet, when granted autonomy in a setting of corporate trust and coupled with intrinsic incentive, people put forth discretionary effort as opposed to shirking (Wu et al., 2014; Zak, 2017). According to the principles of self-determination theory, job autonomy gives people more drive and individuality, which has a good impact on their results both personally and professionally (Deci et al., 2017).

Recognition

Recognition is the expression of admiration for or approval of the good deeds or behaviours of a person or group (Caligiuri, Lepak & Bonache, 2010; Nelson, 2005). According to Gostick and Elton

(2007), praise or a personal note recognising accomplishments, including tiny gestures that are significant to employees, is referred to as recognition. Programs for recognising employees engage in a variety of activities. These can range from a sincere and private thank you to extensive and official programmes where certain behaviours are promoted and where the steps for receiving acknowledgment are made very clear. According to Nyakundi et al. (2012), the purpose of recognition is to let people know and understand that their work is respected and appreciated. This boosts morale, fosters loyalty, and promotes employee retention rates within a business (Abena & Dorcas, 2016). Also, it has been scientifically demonstrated that staff members that feel valued have higher self-esteem and are better able to provide consumers with a standout service delivery experience (Gostick & Elton, 2007).

Employees can be recognised or shown appreciation in a variety of ways, according to Mussie et al. (2013): letters, postcards, memory items, non-cash rewards (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2010) with trophy value, symbolic gestures by managers (Nelson & Spritzer, 2002), a picture displayed prominently, having a room or hallway named after them, posting names on the company's notice board or website, a video rental certificate, a coffee card (Nelson, 2005).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement refers to task-related activities that are associated with a person's capability and ability to openly express their desires and opinions at work (Robinson, Wang, & Kiewitz, 2014). Employee engagement refers to an individual's commitment to and participation in the organisation, as well as its goals, values, and principles. Employee engagement also combines loyalty, fidelity, effectiveness, and ownership (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). Employee engagement is a state of mind that is demonstrated by an individual's initiative, adaptation, effort, and perseverance in pursuing organisational goals (Uddin, Mahmood, and Fan, 2019). Employee engagement may also be thought of as a psychological or emotional condition in which workers carry out duties and work while feeling a sense of ownership over the organization's performance. According to Anitha (2014), a number of variables, including leadership, team and coworker, training and career development, salary, organisational policies, workplace well-being, and work environment, will be used to gauge employee engagement.

Employees with a high level of employee engagement, according to Van der Voet and Vermeeren (2017), are enthusiastic and dedicated to high performance and self-improvement. The most precious asset to a firm is an engaged employee. Sharma and Nambudiri (2020) claim that highly engaged employees are more likely to exert effort in assigned tasks, use originality and creativity in problem-solving, and show initiative and enthusiasm at work. Also, according to Carbonara (2012), motivated employees are exceedingly inventive. Workplaces flourish when its personnel are devoted to and emotionally, cognitively, and physically attached to their jobs (Strom, et al. 2014). Employees with high levels of employee engagement, according to Van der Voet and Vermeeren (2017), are enthusiastic and laser-focused on giving exceptional performances and improving themselves.

Vigour

The level of vigour reflects how actively, independently (Chan, 2019) and upbeatly employees engage in their work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010). An employee's feelings associated to physical strength, emotional energy, and cognitive activity are referred to as vigour, which is a collection of interrelated affective states that employees experience at work (Shirom, 2010). One facet of employee engagement is vigour, which suggests high employee energy at work, mental fortitude, and investment in the actual work, as well as a high degree of persistence even in the face of challenges (Shekari, 2015). The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which incorporates high mental resilience at work, willingness to put effort into work, and tenacity of employees even when confronting problems, can be used to quantify vigour (Schaufeli, 2012). A person's level of awareness to carry out obligations and responsibilities is necessary for good performance results. Vigor is characterised by high energy levels and mental toughness at work. According to Bakker et al. (2018), vigour can encourage employees to perform at their highest levels and is based on organisational expectations. Someone will naturally want to act in a way that benefits the organisation, and they will be motivated to do so (Shirom, 2010). It can be said that vigour influences employee performance positively.

Dedication

To achieve personally meaningful achievements (professional demands and identity), dedication is described as a person's emotionally steady and positive attitude towards work (Sadovaya & Korchagina, 2016). When someone is dedicated, they put their all into their work and feel a feeling of purpose, passion, inspiration, pride, and challenges (Schaufeli, et al., 2017). Job dedication, on the other hand, is defined by (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996) as a person's disciplined behaviour at work, which involves compliance in adhering to the rules, working hard, having resiliency in carrying out tasks, and being able to take the initiative in solving difficulties. Employee performance and motivation in carrying out their duties and responsibilities have a considerable influence on the attainment of organisational goals and interests. Employee motivation to perform successfully is based on job dedication, which can drive employees to behave consciously in promoting the organization's interests (Van Scotter & Motowidlo, 1996). Dedicated employees, on the other hand, better understand and support the company's principles and are more likely to go above and beyond to safeguard the company's image. As a result, motivated personnel help the business reach its goals (Bamidele & Konya, 2019). The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which covers being extremely immersed in work, feeling important and significant, passionate, inspirational, proud, and enjoying the challenges, can be used to evaluate dedication (Schaufeli, 2012). It is evident that dedication affects employee performance favourably.

Empirical Review

Pandzic and Hadziahmetovic (2022) studied the "Impact of Intrinsic Rewards on Employee Engagement in the Food Industry in Bosnia and Herzegovina". The research aims to investigate

how important intrinsic rewards are and how it affects employee engagement in the food industry in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Quantitative data were collected using questionnaires and survey methods. It was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Research reached 210 employees using the convenience sampling method. The results show that a Positive and significant relationship exists between intrinsic rewards and employee engagement, which proves that autonomy is an essential ingredient in the engagement of employees. Universal application in each business field, with the focus on human resource management, applicable to creating reward packages and enhancing employee engagement. Implications for future research are discussed.

Danish, et al., (2015) studied the "Effect of intrinsic rewards on task performance of employees: Mediating role of motivation". A correlational explanatory research design was employed. 300 questionnaires was distributed among which 290 were returned resulting in a response rate of 96%. Hypotheses were verified using correlation analysis with the help of SPSS and structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS 18. The results revealed that intrinsic rewards have positive impact on task performance of employees working in banks and motivation and its dimensions, i.e., intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction mediated this relationship. Considering the importance of appreciations received by bankers in the form of rewards and their effect on extra role performance and sophisticated management, it was therefore recommended that policy makers should take necessary steps for improving the reward management system which will increase the task performance of employees because they will be motivated by these performance appraisal techniques.

Ibitomi, et al., (2022) studied the "Influence of Intrinsic Reward on Employees' Performance in Deposit Money Banks in Ondo State, Nigeria". The survey research design was used, and the sample size was 240 members of staff from the entire population of 1130 selected deposit money bank in Ondo State. Questionnaire was used as a research instrument which was divided into two sections (Bio-data and main content). Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics was used to analyze the data. The study shows that only promotion (=0.444, p = 0.05) as a variable of intrinsic reward has the significant and highest effect on employees' performance as compared to bonuses and fringe benefits. Also, praise and recognition (=0.442, p = 0.05) have the significant and highest effect on employees' performance. The study concluded that amidst all the intrinsic rewards adopted by the organization, praise and recognition increase employee performance more than others used in DMBs. The study suggested that workers should be given more difficult tasks to bring out their best, that staff should be promoted when they deserve it, and that employees should get more benefits like health care, a place to live, clothes, and free lunch to encourage them to work harder.

3.0 Methodology

The survey design was employed in this study and a population of 138 employees of 12 selected fast food firms in Rivers State were covered. A sample of 103 was drawn from the population using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Copies of questionnaire were administered and the

systematic sampling technique was utilized. The predictor variable (intrinsic reward) was measured with autonomy and recognition as contained in Akhigbe Ezebuiro and Akhigbe (2020). 5 items were used in measuring autonomy (I enjoy high autonomy in my organization) and 6 items were used in measuring recognition (my organization organizes recognition program often). Employee engagement was measured using vigour and dedication as presented in De-lacalle-Duran and Rodriguez-Sanchez (2021). 5 items were used in measuring vigour (I display high energy in my work) and 5 items were used in measuring dedication (I am enthusiastic about my work). The items were rated on a 4-pointy likert scale and the items were analyzed using Spearman Rank Order Correlation.

4.0 Results

From a total 103 questionnaire that were distributed, only 98 copies were distributed and the analysis was undertaken as 95% level of confidence.

Hypotheses 1 and 2

Table 1: Autonomy and Measures of Employee Engagement

			Autonomy	Vigour	Dedication
Spearman's rho	Autonomy	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.459*	.514**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
		N	98	98	98
		Correlation Coefficient	.459*	1.000	.109
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.092
		N	98	98	98
	Dedication	Correlation Coefficient	.514**	.159*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.014	
		N	98	98	98

^{*.} Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between autonomy and vigour of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

According to the analysis' findings in Table 1, there is a substantial correlation between autonomy and vigour at the level of 0.05 (0.000<0.05) and rho = 0.459. This proves that there is a moderate link between autonomy and vigour. The null hypothesis were rejected and the alternate accepted.

HO₂: There is no significant relationship between autonomy and dedication of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

A significant level of p<0.05 (0.000<0.05) and rho = 0.514 between autonomy and dedication is shown by the analysis in Table 1. This demonstrates that autonomy and dedication have a substantial link. Hence, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate was accepted.

Hypotheses 3 and 4

Table 2: Recognition and Measures of Employee Engagement
Correlations

			Recognition	Vigour	Dedication
rho	Recognition	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.574**	.443*
		Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.027
		N	98	98	98
		Correlation Coefficient	.574**	1.000	.159*
Spearman's		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.014
Sarr		N	98	98	98
Spe	Dedication	Correlation Coefficient	.443*	.159*	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	.014	
		N	98	98	98

^{*.} Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

HO₃: There is no significant relationship between recognition and vigour of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

According to the analysis' findings in Table 2, there is a substantial correlation between recognition and vigour at the level of 0.05 (0.000<0.05) and rho = 0.574. This proves that there is a moderate link between recognition and vigour.

HO₄: There is no significant relationship between recognition and dedication of fast food firms in Rivers State, Nigeria.

A significant level of p<0.05 (0.027<0.05) and rho = 0.443 between recognition and dedication is shown by the analysis in Table 2. This demonstrates that recognition and dedication have a substantial link. We thus rejected that null hypothesis and accept the alternate.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

The outcome of the analysis revealed that autonomy have a significant and positive relationship with vigour owing that the P-value of 0.000 was less than 0.05 level of significance. This is to say that autonomy enhances the level of vigour of employees in the workplace. The correlational value was 0.459 which implies that a moderate positive relationship exists between autonomy and vigour. Autonomy can thus moderately influence vigour of employees. The coefficient of determination was 0.21. Hence, a unit chance in autonomy will account for a total 21% variation in vigour displayed by employees in organization. Similarly, autonomy in organization has a significant and positive relationship with dedication of employees. When employees are given the autonomy in doing their job, such will make them to get more dedicated. The higher level of dedication in employees can be thus influenced by the autonomy enjoyed by the workers. The correlational value between autonomy and dedication was 0.514 and the coefficient of determination was 0.26, which implies that 26% variation in dedication can be accounted for by a unit change in autonomy.

Furthermore, recognition is a key factor in organization because of its impact on employees state of the mind, recognition of employees in organization is positively correlated with vigour of the employees. By extension, recognition improves vigour and make the employee more engaged in the organization. The correlation value was 0.574 and the coefficient of determination was 32.9. As such, 32.9% change in vigour can be explained by a unit change in recognition. The outcome of the fourth hypothesis showed that recognition among employees has a positive and significant relationship with dedication. The outcome also revealed that the correlational figure among recognition and dedication was 0.443. This implies that a moderate relationship exists between the variables. The coefficient of determination between recognition and dedication was 0.196 which indicated that a unit change in recognition will result in 19.6% variation in dedication. Engagement of employees in the fast food firms is enhanced by the intrinsic reward in organization. This findings agrees with that of Pandzic and Hadziahmetovic (2022) whose finding revealed that intrinsic reward impacts employee engagement and they proved that autonomy is an essential ingredient in the engagement of employees. Danish, et al., (2015) also contended that intrinsic reward help motivate employees to get more engaged which thus boost the performance of the firm.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The engagement of employees in organization remain a key factor which is necessary in enhancing the fortune of organization. Employees reward help in enhancing the level of engagement of the employees. Creating some level of autonomy for the employees help in motivating them to get more engaged in the workplace. The positive correlation between autonomy with vigour and dedication suggest that employee is most likely to exert more vigour in the workplace when the have autonomy in carrying out their work. Autonomy create a sense of responsibility in the employees and they take responsibility if any thing goes wrong. Hence, such employees get more engaged in their work to ensure that they achieve optimal goal. The higher the autonomy given to employees then more they get engaged. Furthermore, recognition in organization influences the positive psychological state of the employees which thus make them feel valued and then display more vigour in the organization. A positive link exist between recognition and vigour. This implies that as recognition increases, the vigour displayed by the employees also increase drastically. Hence, organization that pay attention towards recognition programs are most likely to have highly engaged employees. Conclusively, intrinsic reward in terms of autonomy and recognition play a vital role in organization which thus help boost the engagement of the employees. It is thus recommended that;

- i. Employees should be allowed to work independently with less supervision in the fast food firms as such will enhance their vigour.
- ii. The management of the food and beverages firms should allow employees to display their ingenuity when carrying out their duties as such will enhance their level of dedication in organization.
- iii. Recognition programs should be organized for well performance or behaved employees as such will make employee to get more engaged.

iv. Recognition should be void of bias in order to fuel engagement among workers in the organization.

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