The Impact of Rewards on Job Satisfaction: A Systematic Literature Review

Cao Shuxia, Mohd Anuar Bin Arshad*, Liu Jingjie

Universiti Sains Malaysia
Email: caoshuxia13210531006@gmail.com, jingjieliu1109@gmail.com
Corresponding Author Email: Anuar_arshad@usm.my

Abstract

This study adopts a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to comprehensively examine the mechanisms through which rewards influence employees' job satisfaction. First, the study provides a detailed review of the evolving definitions of rewards, encompassing multiple dimensions such as intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, economic and non-economic rewards, as well as tangible and intangible forms. These definitions not only highlight the diversity of rewards but also underscore their unique role in employee motivation. The study emphasizes the critical role of rewards in fostering positive employee attitudes toward work, particularly in building organizational support, enhancing personal achievement, and shaping a favorable work environment.Second, this research analyzes the complex and multifaceted relationship between rewards and job satisfaction, revealing the moderating effects of cultural contexts, industry characteristics, and individual differences. The findings indicate that reward fairness, types, and implementation methods are key variables influencing job satisfaction. Furthermore, rewards not only enhance job satisfaction but also contribute to organizational effectiveness by promoting organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), strengthening employee loyalty, and improving job performance. This study provides a theoretical basis for optimizing reward mechanisms and practical management strategies.
Keywords: Rewards, Job Satisfaction, Intrinsic Rewards, Extrinsic Rewards, Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)

Introduction

Rewards and job satisfaction are key research topics in the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management. As a primary tool for motivating employees, rewards have been extensively examined in theoretical discussions and are widely recognized in practice as critical factors for enhancing employee performance and organizational effectiveness. Job satisfaction, on the other hand, serves as an important indicator of employees' attitudes toward their work and work environment and is closely associated with employee well-being, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and organizational loyalty.

In recent years, globalization and increased economic pressures have led organizations to reassess their reward systems. Research suggests that effective rewards not only fulfill employees' basic needs but also stimulate their potential through intrinsic motivation, ultimately enhancing overall job satisfaction (Herzberg, 1959; Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, the types of rewards and their implementation methods may have distinctly different effects on employee satisfaction. For instance, economic rewards, such as salaries and bonuses, and non-economic rewards, such as career development opportunities and recognition, play different roles in motivational mechanisms, each with its own strengths and limitations (Armstrong & Murlis, 2007).

Furthermore, modern organizations increasingly recognize the importance of reward fairness in shaping job satisfaction. Studies have found that employees' perceptions of fairness in reward distribution not only influence their attitudes toward the organization but also directly affect their work motivation and turnover intentions (Rasch & Szypko, 2013). Simultaneously, the forms and content of rewards have evolved over time. From traditional monetary incentives to comprehensive reward models that address employees' psychological and emotional needs, rewards have become multi-dimensional tools for enhancing both job satisfaction and organizational performance (WorldatWork, 2006; Madhani, 2021).

Although extensive literature has explored the relationship between rewards and job satisfaction, there remains a research gap in understanding how rewards influence satisfaction by meeting employees' needs and shaping organizational culture. Additionally, the effectiveness of rewards in different types, cultural contexts, and industries has yet to yield definitive conclusions. Therefore, this study aims to systematically review the existing research on the impact of rewards on job satisfaction, analyze the underlying mechanisms, and provide theoretical support and practical guidance for future research.

Research Significance
This study employs a systematic literature review to investigate the relationship between rewards and job satisfaction, offering new perspectives for both theory and practice. By integrating existing literature, the paper not only deepens the understanding of the multidimensional nature of the reward concept and its impact on job satisfaction but also provides a basis for managers to optimize motivational mechanisms, helping to enhance employee satisfaction and their commitment to the organization. Furthermore, this research summarizes the progress and shortcomings in the field of rewards and job satisfaction, pointing out directions for future studies. It calls for more empirical research in different cultural and industry contexts to more comprehensively reveal the diversity of rewards and their influencing mechanisms.

Research Methodology
To address the specific research question, this study adopts the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method. The SLR approach emphasizes a rigorous and transparent research process to ensure that the findings can be replicated by other researchers. In recent years, SLR has gained increasing recognition and attention in the fields of business and management (McGuire, 2021; Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017). Following the SLR process recommended by Tranfield et al. (2003), relevant secondary data were systematically retrieved and collected

from well-established databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, ensuring consistency with prior research methodologies.

The literature review findings closely related to this research topic have been synthesized into the grid diagram below. This grid diagram aims to present and integrate the key findings from previous studies, providing readers with a clear and comprehensive overview of the existing research landscape.
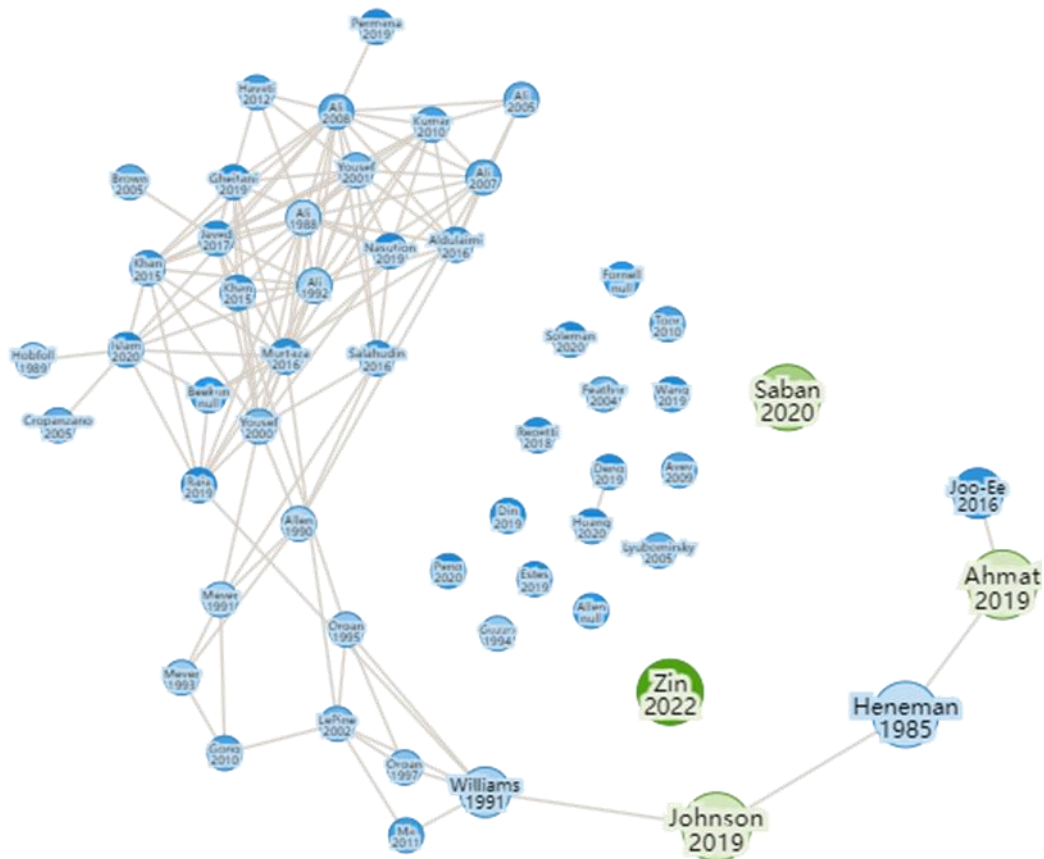
Literature Review on Rewards and Job Satisfaction
Concepts and Types of Rewards

Rewards, as essential motivators and compensations for employees within organizations, have long been a prominent topic in management and psychology research. Various theories and studies have attempted to define and explain the concept of "rewards" from different perspectives and dimensions.

First, Bratton and Gold (2003) provided a relatively comprehensive definition of rewards, describing them as all monetary, non-monetary, and psychological compensations offered by organizations to employees in exchange for their work. This definition underscores the multifaceted nature of rewards, encompassing monetary, non-monetary, and psychological aspects.

Regarding economic and non-economic rewards, scholars such as Armstrong and Murlis (2007) and Jiang and Birch (2012) have made detailed distinctions. Economic rewards mainly refer to monetary and financial benefits directly tied to work and individual contributions, such as bonuses, commissions, profit sharing, and various allowances. In contrast, non-economic rewards focus on intangible benefits, including recognition, praise, participation in decision-making, career development opportunities, and on-the-job training.

The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards is another important dimension in reward research. Herzberg's two-factor theory (1959, 1966) differentiated intrinsic rewards (e.g., a sense of achievement) that influence job satisfaction from extrinsic rewards (e.g., salary and benefits) that influence dissatisfaction. Similarly, Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory (1985, 2000) explored these two types of rewards and emphasized the role of intrinsic rewards in fostering self-driven motivation and improving job performance. Intrinsic rewards typically involve intangible elements such as responsibility, autonomy, and recognition, while extrinsic rewards are associated with tangible aspects like salary, benefits, and bonuses (Deci et al., 1989; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The classification of tangible and intangible rewards focuses on the specific forms of rewards. According to Madhani (2021), tangible rewards are explicitly provided by organizations, measurable, and include basic salary, performance bonuses, commissions, and potential non-cash rewards (e.g., goods or services). In contrast, intangible rewards include job satisfaction, enhanced self-esteem, and recognition within the organization, such as formal or informal praise, which contribute to employees' sense of value and appreciation.

The WorldatWork Association (2006) introduced a comprehensive total rewards model encompassing five dimensions: compensation, benefits, work-life balance, performance and recognition, and development and career opportunities. This model highlights the multidimensional and holistic nature of rewards, integrating compensation and recognition into a broader reward framework. Additionally, as Armstrong (2010) noted, the components of total rewards also include learning and development, work environment, and recognition programs, further expanding the scope and impact of rewards.

Concepts and Evolution of Job Satisfaction
Job satisfaction, as a core concept in organizational behavior and human resource management, has been extensively studied by numerous scholars who have provided various definitions. Although these definitions differ in wording, they generally focus on job satisfaction as an emotion, attitude, fulfillment of needs, and a response to the work environment.

First, regarding emotional and psychological states, Hoppock (1935) was one of the earliest scholars to define job satisfaction, describing it as employees' positive feelings about the psychological and physical factors related to their work. This definition emphasizes the relationship between job satisfaction and individuals' psychological and physiological responses to the work environment. Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences." This definition highlights emotional states, focusing on how individuals evaluate and feel about their work. Organ and Ryan (1995) regarded job satisfaction as an emotional state, inherently

an attitude. Mullins (2005) related job satisfaction to motivation, suggesting that while the two are connected, their relationship remains unclear. Job satisfaction is more of an attitude or intrinsic state than motivation itself. Aziri (2011) defined job satisfaction as a feeling derived from the perception that work satisfies both material and psychological needs. Similarly, Robbins and Judge (2017) argued that job satisfaction is a positive feeling about one's work based on the evaluation of its characteristics.

Second, in terms of attitudes and perceptions, Spector (1997) defined job satisfaction as people's feelings about their job and its various aspects, representing the degree to which they like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their work. Weiss et al. (1967) considered job satisfaction as workers' attitudes and opinions toward their job and its associated environment, encompassing both intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction. Davis et al. (1985) described job satisfaction as employees' positive or negative feelings about their work. Armstrong (2006) further elaborated, stating that job satisfaction reflects people's attitudes and feelings about their work, where positive attitudes indicate satisfaction and negative attitudes indicate dissatisfaction. According to Kong et al. (2018), job satisfaction reflects employees' overall positive attitude toward their work. Similarly, Andreas (2022) concluded that job satisfaction refers to the positive or negative attitudes individuals hold toward their job activities.

Next, concerning need fulfillment and rewards, Togia et al. (2004) proposed that job satisfaction is a function of how well an individual's needs are met through their work. This definition takes a needs-based approach, focusing on how the work environment fulfills personal needs. Statt (2004) defined job satisfaction as the degree to which workers feel satisfied with the rewards they receive from their job, particularly intrinsic motivation. This definition highlights the link between job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation.

Finally, considering work roles and the environment, Vroom (1964) defined job satisfaction as the emotional orientation individuals have toward their current occupational roles. This definition portrays job satisfaction as an emotional experience associated with individuals' professional roles. Wright (2006) defined job satisfaction as employees' subjective responses to their work environment, including psychological, physiological, and workplace conditions. This definition views job satisfaction as a comprehensive and multidimensional concept.

The Multifaceted Impacts of Rewards
In the field of employee rewards, numerous scholars have extensively explored the relationships between rewards and various work-related variables.
When examining the relationship between rewards and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), research has found that anticipated rewards can motivate employees to exhibit more OCB (Korsgaard et al., 2010). This suggests that employees are more likely to engage in OCB when they expect to receive some form of reward or recognition. According to N. P. Podsakoff et al. (2009), rewards are also an outcome of OCB. Specifically, employees who demonstrate higher levels of OCB are more likely to receive favorable performance evaluations and reward allocations.

Regarding the relationship between rewards and employee loyalty, studies indicate that satisfactory rewards and a supportive work environment can enhance employee loyalty and reduce turnover intentions (Srenitzerova & Achimsky, 2019; Ya-Hsin & Hung-Sheng, 2017). For instance, in certain contexts, financial rewards, such as salary increases, have been found to significantly impact job satisfaction and employee loyalty (Mazlan et al., 2021). A comprehensive reward strategy is considered a crucial factor in maintaining employee loyalty to an organization (Abdullah, 2011; Gupta & Shaw, 2014; Iqbal et al., 2015).

Rewards have also been found to have a positive impact on employee motivation. As a form of positive reinforcement, rewards are believed to guide and shape employee behavior to align with organizational expectations and goals (Chiang & Birtch, 2012; Adeoye, Atiku, & Fields, 2016). Both financial and non-financial rewards are considered effective motivators that satisfy a wide range of human needs and desires, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation (Maslow, 1954).

In exploring reward fairness, research emphasizes the critical importance of equitable reward distribution. Employees' perceptions of reward fairness are considered significant factors in shaping their attitudes and behaviors (Dessler, 2016; Rasch & Szypko, 2013). For example, when employees perceive rewards to be fairly distributed, they are more likely to exhibit positive OCB (Begum et al., 2012).

Rewards are also closely linked to employee and organizational performance. An appropriate reward system is regarded as an effective mechanism for motivating employees to enhance job performance (Koo et al., 2020b; Lawler, 1990). For instance, when employees believe their efforts will be rewarded accordingly, they are more likely to invest greater effort into their work (Aktar et al., 2012).

Comprehensive reward strategies, encompassing both financial and non-financial rewards, are recognized as essential tools for motivating employees and improving job satisfaction, loyalty, and performance (Abdullah, 2011; Gupta & Shaw, 2014). Properly designed and implemented reward systems can help organizations achieve better business outcomes and higher employee satisfaction (Armstrong, 2010; WorldatWork, 2006).

Antecedents of Job Satisfaction
Exploring the multifaceted and complex nature of job satisfaction requires understanding the diverse factors that influence its formation. Job satisfaction results from the interplay of various dimensions, such as compensation, work environment, leadership style, personal characteristics, and organizational culture. For instance, Yang and Kassekert (2009) emphasized these factors in the context of public administration, while Christen, Iyer, and Soberman (2006) pointed out that these influences may vary depending on job tasks.

Organizational culture and climate have a profound impact on employees' job satisfaction. Patah, Zain, Abdullah, and Radzi (2009) found that positive work climates and strong organizational support significantly enhance employee satisfaction through their evaluation of work atmosphere and employment conditions.

Leadership style is another critical determinant of job satisfaction. Research by Chen and Ching (2011) and Yammarino and Dubinsky (1994) explored the positive effects of transformational and transactional leadership on job satisfaction. Transformational leadership is particularly effective in motivating employees, fostering innovation, and driving change, while transactional leadership focuses on reward and punishment mechanisms. Medley and Larochelle (1995) further highlighted a positive correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction, underscoring the importance of leaders' encouragement, inspiration, and support for team members.

Employee participation, empowerment, and feedback are essential in boosting job satisfaction. Bhatti and Qureshi (2007) found that employee involvement in organizational activities significantly improves job satisfaction by enhancing employees' sense of control and belonging. Similarly, Snipes et al. (2005) emphasized the positive impact of empowerment on attitudinal responses and job satisfaction, noting that employees who feel their opinions and actions can influence outcomes exhibit higher satisfaction and engagement. McAfee et al. (1995) examined the influence of discretion, outcome feedback, and process feedback on job satisfaction, revealing that appropriate autonomy and timely feedback are crucial for improving satisfaction. Kurja et al. (2016) further emphasized that when empowerment is coupled with training and development opportunities, employees' understanding and efficiency improve, leading to higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Compensation structures and reward systems also play a significant role in shaping job satisfaction. Ineson et al. (2000) and Lam et al. (2001) highlighted the direct importance of salary levels on job satisfaction. Moreover, Ileana Petrescu and Simmons (2008) focused on performance-based pay and seniority-based reward systems, demonstrating that the design of compensation structures has a notable impact on employee satisfaction. Aksu and Alan (2005) explored the sensitivity of salary issues and their complex effects on job satisfaction, indicating that compensation is not merely an economic issue but also closely tied to employees' perceptions and expectations.

In terms of reward systems, Bateman and Organ (1983), Organ and Konovsky (1989), and Schnake et al. (1995) investigated the relationship between reward systems (e.g., bonuses, promotions) and job satisfaction, emphasizing the importance of other forms of rewards beyond salary in enhancing employee satisfaction. Hsieh (2011) further studied the impact of material and social rewards on job satisfaction, while Ardiansyah and Wulansari (2018) highlighted the role of rewards in improving individual performance. Finally, Chimanikire et al. (2007) concluded that when employees perceive a balance between their contributions and the rewards they receive, job satisfaction improves, emphasizing the importance of fairness and proper recognition.

Additionally, investments in employee development, education, and training are critical for influencing job satisfaction. Choi and Dickson (2010) highlighted the importance of effective training programs in enhancing employee satisfaction, finding that such programs not only improve employees' skills and capabilities but also boost their satisfaction with their work.

The relationship between job characteristics and satisfaction is multifaceted. Tsigilis et al. (2006) focused on job characteristics such as workload and time pressure, noting that these factors can negatively impact employee satisfaction. Kazemzadeh and Bashiri (2005) expanded this area by examining the combined effects of job characteristics, employee motivation, education, and salary on satisfaction.

Physical factors in the work environment also significantly influence employee satisfaction. Ceylan (1998) highlighted the importance of comfortable workplaces, proper ventilation, adequate lighting, and temperature control in enhancing satisfaction. Hadjimanolis and Boustras (2013) emphasized the role of health and safety policies in improving job satisfaction, noting that a safe and healthy work environment is essential for both employee satisfaction and productivity.

Interpersonal relationships and social support are also vital components of job satisfaction. Robbins (2002) noted that good interpersonal relationships and social support not only significantly improve job satisfaction but also enhance overall work efficiency. Judge and Bono (2001) explored the influence of situational and personality factors on job satisfaction. Schermerhorn, Hunt, and Osborn (1994) stressed the importance of interpersonal relationships within organizations, particularly between leaders and subordinates. Williams (1998) focused on workplace social support systems, including peer support and organizational support, emphasizing their critical role in enhancing job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Link between Rewards and Job Satisfaction
Extensive research has confirmed a positive correlation between rewards and job satisfaction. Both intrinsic rewards (e.g., recognition and a sense of achievement) and extrinsic rewards (e.g., salary and bonuses) significantly enhance employees' job satisfaction (Mosquera et al., 2020). For instance, monetary rewards such as salaries and bonuses, as well as non-monetary rewards like praise and recognition, have proven effective in sustaining employee commitment and motivating their engagement (Danish, 2010; Linz & Semykina, 2012).

Moreover, the organizational reward climate plays a critical role in influencing employee satisfaction. Studies have shown a strong positive correlation between a supportive reward environment and job satisfaction. Chiang and Birtch (2011) highlighted that a supportive reward environment not only enhances job satisfaction but also strengthens organizational commitment. Similarly, Jose (2015) emphasized that effective reward management practices motivate employees and improve their job satisfaction.In the hospitality industry, the relationship between rewards and job satisfaction is particularly pronounced. Bustamam et al. (2014) found that both financial and non-financial rewards positively impact job satisfaction among employees in this sector. Additionally, Mazlan et al. (2021) pointed out that a well-structured reward system is essential for improving employee loyalty and fostering motivation.

In summary, a balanced and well-designed reward system, encompassing both financial and non-financial rewards, is pivotal in enhancing job satisfaction and strengthening

organizational commitment. This conclusion holds across various industries and underscores the universal importance of effective reward practices.

Conclusion and Implications

This study, through a systematic literature review, has thoroughly explored the multifaceted impact of rewards on job satisfaction. It highlights that intrinsic rewards (e.g., sense of achievement, recognition, and autonomy) and extrinsic rewards (e.g., salary, benefits, and bonuses) significantly enhance employees' job satisfaction. Furthermore, the fairness, types, and implementation strategies of rewards play critical roles in shaping employee satisfaction. Notably, comprehensive reward strategies not only foster employee loyalty and motivation but also promote organizational citizenship behavior and improve organizational performance.

This review contributes to the field by synthesizing existing research to provide a clearer understanding of the mechanisms through which rewards influence job satisfaction. It underscores the importance of balancing intrinsic and extrinsic rewards while ensuring fairness in reward distribution to achieve optimal satisfaction. Additionally, this study offers actionable insights for organizations, emphasizing the integration of reward mechanisms with strategic management practices to address the complex interplay of factors affecting job satisfaction, including organizational culture, leadership styles, and work environments. These contributions serve as a foundation for future empirical studies and the refinement of reward system designs.

Research Limitations

Although this study employs a systematic literature review approach and cites a substantial body of relevant research, it has several limitations. First, the collection of literature is restricted to Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar databases, potentially excluding valuable studies not indexed in these sources. Second, the research primarily focuses on the impact of rewards on job satisfaction without fully accounting for the moderating effects of contextual factors such as cultural and industry-specific differences, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Third, while the study provides a multidimensional analysis of reward types, it lacks detailed empirical support to explore the specific mechanisms linking rewards to job satisfaction. Lastly, the study heavily relies on existing theoretical models, with limited attention to emerging research trends and innovative exploration.

Future Research Directions

Future research should broaden the scope of literature collection to include studies from regional or non-mainstream journals, addressing the limitations of data sources. Additionally, cross-cultural comparisons or case studies in specific industries could be conducted to examine how cultural and industry contexts moderate the relationship between rewards and job satisfaction, thereby enhancing contextual adaptability. Empirical research should also further investigate the interactive effects of different dimensions of rewards (e.g., tangible vs. psychological rewards) and their mechanisms influencing job satisfaction. Furthermore, with the advancement of artificial intelligence and digital technologies, future studies could explore the use of intelligent reward systems to improve employee job satisfaction, offering innovative insights and tools for modern management practices.

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