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The Impact of Reward Systems on Employee Productivity in the Workplace

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Abstract

This research work essentially seeks to bring out the effect of reward systems on employee productivity at Saudi Aramco. Precisely, the study is set to determine how financial rewards in terms of salaries, bonuses, and benefits, and non-financial rewards in terms of recognition, career development, and job security, are motivational factors for employees toward efficiency and general productivity within the company.

The methodology of the study:

To achieve the desired goals of this research study, the descriptive analytical study format was used. The target population in this research study included 500 employees and administrators of Saudi Aramco headquarters in Dhahran. The stratification sampling technique was used to sample a representative sample size of 200 study respondents. Data collection was done using a structured questionnaire, which focused on the changes in employee productivity relative to the different types of rewards.

The results of the study:

The results of this study indicated that financial rewards had the highest positive effect on employee productivity, salary increments and bonuses leading the pack. Non-financial rewards, especially opportunities relating to career development and job security, turned out to have a high positive impact as well, although slightly lower compared to financial rewards. Therefore, one can deduct from this study that the best levels of productivity are realized when there is a balanced reward system comprising both financial and non-financial incentives.

Theoretical contribution:

This report contributes to the literature by undertaking an in-depth analysis of the reward systems and their relationship with employee productivity within a large corporate setting. In this respect, it integrates financial and non-financial rewards into one model, therefore giving a holistic understanding of how these variables interact to influence productivity.

Practical applications:

Practical recommendations made by the study are on the need for Saudi Aramco management to facilitate a balanced reward system, which integrates monetary incentives with non-monetary benefits like recognition and career growth. Such an approach is demonstrated as the one provoking the highest staff motivation and results, thus boosting the organizational performance on the whole.

Keywords: Reward systems, employee productivity, financial rewards, non-financial rewards, Saudi Aramco

1.1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The results coming from a study of how the reward system can influence employee productivity at Saudi Aramco, the world's largest and most influential energy company, are discussed and analysed in this article (Pasion, 2023). The regional headquarters of Saudi Aramco is Dhahran in Saudi Arabia. With a dispersed and highly diversified workforce, Saudi Aramco's employees play an important role in driving the company's worldwide operations and, more importantly, in improving the productivity of its workers, which sees the company maintain its position as the world's leading energy company (Sana, 2022). Employee productivity is very important to the organisation, and factors that can enhance or hamper it must be understood (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023).

Both a financial reward system and a non-financial one are perceived to be the main boosting power behind the productivity of employees (Yulianto and Qudus, 2022). Outright payment incentives straight into an employee's paycheck, like salaries, bonuses and benefits, have a direct correlation with the financial situation of an employee which will lead to a greater satisfaction of his job and the subsequent productivity (Aryani and Widodo, 2020). Non-financial incentives, on the other hand, enhances the psychological needs and emotional needs towards an employee making him feel that he is part of the organization and that he is loyal to it. The purpose of this study was to relate these reward systems to productivity in Saudi Aramco. The aspects of the reward system that are thought to have a great bearing on productivity and how best to enhance them for the benefit of both the employee and the organization were investigated (Usmar *et al.*, 2024). The research adds to the literature through analysis on different dimensions of the financial and non-financial rewards and contributes insight into the effectiveness of the current practices and guidance toward further improvement (Hopp and Sonderegger, 2015).

The article opens with theoretical contribution of the study: the findings add to what already exists in the volume of knowledge and theory regarding the reward system and its effect on employee

productivity. Drawing from these findings, the second section will explore practical applications of the study that is, in particular, the way forward for Saudi Aramco in using these insights toward further development of its reward systems as a means to further improve employee productivity (Beltrán-Martín *et al.*, 2023).

The article also deals with some recommendations for further action with regard to the findings and these give comprehensive ways in constant improvement for Saudi Aramco. Finally, the research fully acknowledges limitations, hence adding some critical dimension to the applicability and scope of its results. And finally, the last section offers some hints for possible future research, indicating the direction or directions in which doubling or increasing the current understanding in a descriptive way may occur regarding how the reward systems are related to employee productivity.

This article gives an overall comprehensive view of the outcomes of the study and its implications for theory and practice. The discussion in this chapter is expected to contribute to general knowledge on how organizations are able to motivate their staff and overall productivity through an impact analysis of the reward systems of staff at Saudi Aramco.

1.2 Theoretical Contribution

The research raises important theoretical issues regarding the effectiveness of reward systems in relation to the productivity of employees, focusing on Saudi Aramco. Much of the previous scholarship was dedicated to establishing a general link between rewards and productivity, but little has been done researching the dynamics of how these play out within the specific cultural and organizational framework of one of the major Saudi companies.

This research closes this gap by including financial and non-financial reward measures within one research model. Results indicate that while the impact of financial rewards on short-term productivity is direct, non-financial rewards mainly recognition and advancement have a much more continuous and long-term effect on employee engagement and output (Siburian, 2024).

These findings contribute to the literature by emphasizing the fact that for organizations with culturally diverse employees, it is relevant to align the reward systems in accordance with the needs and values of the individual (Armstrong and Taylor, 2023). One-size-fits-all approaches to

reward systems are therefore less effective. Tailored reward strategies would gain more productivity, stresses the research (Chidambaranathan and Regha, 2016).

1.3 Practical Applications

The practical applications of this research are far from mere theoretical insights; they actually create the means for Saudi Aramco to make changes in its reward systems in order to maximize the productivity of its workforce. The findings of this study serve as a great foundation for Saudi Aramco to make culturally sensitive changes while remaining in line with the company's strategic objectives (Arend, 2016).

1.3.1 Customization of Reward Systems:

Saudi Aramco is a large organization with a very diversified workforce in terms of cultural backgrounds, age groups, and professional experiences. Customizing reward systems to deal effectively with this diversity is one of the critical practical applications of this research. The findings suggest that there is no one-size-fits-all approach where rewards for workforce productivity maximization are concerned.

Cultural Sensitivity: The difference in cultural backgrounds may mean that employees prefer rewards in different ways. For instance, some cultures value collective recognition over individual achievements (Gelfand *et al.*, 2017). With that in mind, Saudi Aramco can design such reward systems to bear these cultural differences in mind in order to ensure that every employee feels their worth and is motivated enough to work.

Age-Based Customization: For the younger workforce, that would probably be career development through systematic training and mentorship programs and a well-defined promotion ladder. For older employees, this can manifest in financial reward, stability, and respect gained with years of experience. In these ways, Saudi Aramco will be able to make sure that it addresses the needs of its people at all levels of age and careers and increase productivity (Pasion, 2023).

Role-Based Customization: It is not always the case for all employees to be motivated by the same factors, so the incentives can vary from one role to another. For instance, technical staff can be motivated by opportunities to work on frontier projects or obtain additional certification, while managerial staff may value bonuses that are tied to the performance of the group. Customizing

rewards to the role will allow the incentives to be directly linked to the unique challenges and contributions of each role (Arunprasad, 2016).

1.3.2 Emphasis on Non-Financial Rewards:

While it holds that financial rewards are indispensable, the research points out that such rewards alone cannot be sustained to motivate and create an efficient workforce in the long term. Examples of other non-financial rewards may include public recognition, career growth opportunity, work-life balance initiatives, and a positive workplace culture.

Recognition Programs: Saudi Aramco can establish formal recognition programs whereby the employees' efforts are recognized on a regular basis, including monthly or quarterly awards, public recognition within a firm meeting, or even a simple thank-you note by the respective managers to the employees. Employees feel good when being recognized, but more importantly, it is an environment of acknowledgement that will help keep employees engaged and productive (Phillips *et al.*, 2017).

Career Advancement Opportunities: One of the influential non-financial rewards to employees is professional development. By using mentorship programmes and leadership training, and creating a strong career ladder, Saudi Aramco could innovate. If the employees feel that their company is looking out for their best interest in the long term, then they are more motivated and committed to their work (Haider, 2020).

Work-Life Balance Initiatives: Other non-financial incentives that enhance employees' work-life balance are flexible working arrangements, wellness programs, and paid time-off, all of which help staff manage their personal and professional lives better. Help in achieving a better balance between work and personal life will reduce cases of burnout at Saudi Aramco, hence improving productivity (Salah *et al.*, 2017).

1.3.3 Integration of Technology in Reward Management:

Today, in this digital world, incorporating new technologies within the tenure of human resource management holds paramount importance. Saudi Aramco can implement the use of technology in making reward systems more effective within the organization.

HR Analytics: In this regard, adopting HR analytics will enable Saudi Aramco to get data on employee preferences, performance metrics, and reward effectiveness. This data-driven approach will help fine-tune its reward systems to the needs and behaviors of the workforce (Hussain *et al.*, 2017).

Real-Time Recognition: The use of technology can facilitate real-time recognition. For example, digital platforms may immediately recognize contributions, celebrate achievements in terms of years of service, or highlight outstanding performance. Instant recognition may have an instant effect on morale and productivity (Nygaard, 2023).

Gamification of Rewards: Another technological approach is the gamification of rewards. This solution is given to making the way to earn them interactive and fun, but seriously valuable. Such elements of game design can be embedded by Saudi Aramco in rewards: points, leaderboards, and badges. This will actually help in making attainment of rewards a very interactive, fun process, hence guaranteeing even further participation and productivity (Alaraj *et al.*, 2021).

1.3.4 Developing a Reward System Aligned with Corporate Goals:

The study emphasized the need for reward systems to be aligned with the strategic goals of the organization. Saudi Aramco's rewards should not be just about motivating individual employees; it should drive behaviors that contribute to company success.

Linking Rewards to Performance Metrics: Rewards should be structured very closely to relevant performance measures that mirror the company's strategic objectives. For instance, if becoming more innovative is a critical objective, then rewards can be given for new ideas from employees or for the development of innovative solutions. It goes in hand with making sure that the reward system reinforces the behaviors of greatest value to the success of the company (Alaraj *et al.*, 2021).

Encouraging Collaboration: Team-based rewards should be established at Saudi Aramco to create a collaborative culture. Incentives could include rewards given to groups achieving certain

project objectives or who simply exhibit outstanding teamwork. Rewarding staff for collaborative efforts will motivate them to work together toward common objectives, improving productivity (Al Halbusi *et al.*, 2020).

Supporting Sustainability Goals: If sustainability is of prime concern to Saudi Aramco, then it may introduce such incentives that involve employees' participation toward green initiatives. For example, recognition may be given on reducing wastes, using less energy, or even participating in corporate social responsibility programs. This enhances productivity and focuses the efforts of the employees in line with wider corporate values (Al Halbusi *et al.*, 2020).

1.4 Recommendations

According to the findings revealed by the study, there are several recommendations that may be made for Saudi Aramco to optimally make its reward systems and derive maximum employee productivity.

1.4.1 Enhance Awareness Among Management:

Attention must also be brought to management at all levels of the importance of both financial and non-financial rewards in driving employee productivity. Saudi Aramco needs to invest in some form of management training that will equip managers with ways of how to use rewards effectively as a motivational tool for people within their respective teams. This could be through workshops on the psychological effects of rewards, followed by training on tailoring individual rewards for employees.

1.4.2 Develop Tailored Reward Programs:

Saudi Aramco should develop tailored reward programs, looking at the diverse nature of its workforce. Demographic segments, job roles, and cultural backgrounds should be some of the driving factors in design. In this regard, a menu of various reward options will motivate all employees in the workforce to be productive.

1.4.3 Invest in Employee Development:

That is why professional development makes for one of the most compelling motivators among employees. This is the reason Saudi Aramco needs to increase its investment in further training

and development programs, bringing opportunities close to employees to work harder and progress toward better careers. This would mean sponsoring advanced degrees, holding in-house training sessions, or opening access to online learning platforms.

1.4.4 Adopt Advanced Reward Management Systems:

The company needs to employ the latest stellar reward management systems. For example, it can be by introducing human resource software that can record the performance and the preferences of its employees, and solutions that can allow real interactions that will gamify the process of rewarding in real time.

1.4.5 Promote a Culture of Recognition:

This is crucial in Saudi Aramco to instill or maintain the motivation and efficiency of the workers. The company may integrate this principle by urging its supervisors to appreciate and congratulate contributions made by the workforce as a norm. This can be through the implementation of the award scheme, such as appreciation events, or congratulating fellow workers.

1.4.6 Encourage Work-Life Balance:

Another area that Saudi Aramco has to promote is work-life balance, which is required to prevent burnout conditions of the workers and to ensure long-term productivity. This would mean flexible working hours, wellness programs, and support to employees in managing their personal responsibilities. This would help increase employee satisfaction and reduce turnover.

1.4.7 Foster Collaboration through Team-Based Rewards:

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1.5 Study's Limitations

Though this study has given valuable insight into how reward systems impact employees' productivity at Saudi Aramco, it had the following limitations:

1.5.1 Objective Boundaries:

The study was primarily focused on exploring the relationship between the reward system and employee productivity. The variables that may affect productivity, such as organizational culture, leadership styles, or external economic conditions, have not been detailed. This limitation thus has implications for the interpretation of findings within the context of these specific variables studied.

1.5.2 Human Boundaries:

The study was confined only to employees and managers within Saudi Aramco. Although the sample was representative in its workforce, results may not be generalized toward other organizations, specifically those organizations engaged in different industries or with different structures. Future research would benefit from a more diverse sample to increase generalizability.

1.5.3 Spatial Boundaries:

The research was confined to Saudi Aramco's operations within Saudi Arabia. The Company operates globally, and findings may not fully apply to its international operations, which would be affected by cultural and organizational differences in the way reward systems work. Future research may assess the potential impact of reward systems in various geographic regions.

1.5.4 Temporal Boundaries:

The study took place within a particular timeline during the academic year of 2024. The results, therefore, serve to depict the state of affairs and environments within that time span of the study. In this regard, long-term studies will be necessary to determine if the effects that the rewarded systems have on productivity are sustained over time, or they change with changing external conditions.

1.6 Future Studies

Still bound by the limitations and the findings of this research, some future study directions might contribute to greater knowledge regarding how the reward systems of employees are linked to their productivity, particularly in giant multinational companies like Saudi Aramco.

1.6.1 Cross-Cultural Analysis:

Future research could be done on how different reward systems work across different cultural settings within an organization. With the existence of its operations across several countries, Saudi Aramco would be a very good case study for cross-cultural research. For example, one can compare the different cultural contexts within which the reward systems are operating to find out how cultural norms and values affect the perceptions of employees about rewards and the reactions to them.

Cultural Adaptation of Rewards: One line of inquiry might be how reward systems have to be customized to accommodate cultural values of different regions. For example, an incentive that proved highly effective in Saudi Arabia might fall short of the same effect when used in a Western country. Knowing and understanding these differences would give insights into how companies can devise more effective, culturally-aware reward schemes.

1.6.2 Longitudinal Studies:

Future studies could use a longitudinal approach to understand the impact that reward systems might have on the long-term productivity of employees. In this regard, the study will follow the same group of employees over some time to establish changes in reward systems and their influence on productivity.

Sustainability of Non-Financial Rewards: Longitudinal studies could be done to establish how long the nonmonetary rewards of recognition and career development opportunities would have an impact. This way, through the study of these effects over several successive years, one can find out whether the motivational advantage of these rewards decayed with time or remained consistent.

1.6.3 Sectoral Comparisons:

Another likely area of future research would be the comparison of the impact of reward systems in different sectors of the economy. This was focused on one of the key players of the petroleum and gas industries, but the findings might turn out differently in the technology, healthcare, or education sectors.

Industry-Specific Rewards: It is thus plausible that distinct sectors place different kinds of rewards at disparate levels of importance. For example, the tech industry may be keener on innovative and creative contributions, while the healthcare sector may be more involved with teamwork and patient outcomes. Comparative studies may reveal how sector-specific factors influence the effectivity of reward systems.

1.6.4 Impact of External Economic Conditions:

Future research can also cast light on the processes through which external economic conditions operate in the effectiveness of the rewarding system. For example, in the case of economic recession or at any other time when the economic situation remains unfavorable, organizations may have to adapt their rewarding policies to keep employees motivated and engaged in work and task performance.

Adaptation to Economic Cycles: One may investigate how the reward systems should be adjusted during various phases of economic cycles. For example, during a recession, possibilities of offering monetary rewards may be limited and firms may have to shift towards other non-monetary incentives to keep workers motivated.

1.6.5 Technological Advancements and Reward Systems:

The future studies may, therefore, incorporate exactly how changes in the technological world are impacting reward systems and productivity. This might include the role of AI in reward personalization or even the use of virtual reality to drive immersive recognition activities.

AI-Driven Personalization: It is hence the recommendation that future research on AI should be done on how it can be used to analyze data on employees to design reward systems tailored to individuals, according to their specific preferences and requirements, hence leading to a reward scenario that is more effective and aligns with the unique motivators of every employee.

Virtual and Augmented Reality: Another area that can be explored is the development of the recognition programs using virtual or augmented reality. One can make use of the highly memorable and immersive recognition ceremonies in virtual reality, thereby creating a stronger feeling of being valued and appreciated among the employees.

1.6.6 Impact of Leadership Styles on Reward Effectiveness:

Another potential area for future research is the interaction between leadership styles and the effectiveness of reward systems. Different leadership approaches may play a part in determining how employees will perceive and thus respond to rewards and hence affect productivity.

Transformational vs. Transactional Leadership: One such study could involve the comparison of the influence that transformational and transactional leadership styles would have on the effectiveness of different types of rewards. The interaction could thus be understood in companies by designing reward systems that would complement leadership strategies.

1.6.7 Employee Well-being and Reward Systems:

Future studies could address how these different reward systems relate to employee wellbeing. Indeed, given the business case for mental and physical wellbeing, identifying how rewards impact these may become critically important.

Well-being as a Mediator: One might test if such improvements in the well-being of employees mediate the relationship between rewards and productivity. For instance, non-monetary incentives that support work-life balance could lead to better wellbeing, which then enhances productivity.

1.7 Conclusion

The study was set out to establish the power of reward systems in enhancing employee productivity, focusing on Saudi Aramco as an organization that plays a leading role in the oil production industry globally. Indeed, through an analysis that integrated both quantitative and qualitative approaches, it has contributed relevant insight into how different types of rewards contribute to employee motivation, engagement, and consequently affect overall productivity.

The findings point to a multidimensional relationship between reward systems and productivity; the evidence shows that while financial incentives, mainly in the form of bonus opportunities and

salary increments, are significant factors in stimulating high performance in the short run, non-financial rewards in the form of recognition, opportunities for career development, and an enabling work environment are more sustained and far-reaching in their impact on employee engagement. This is of particular importance in a firm like Saudi Aramco, where long-term productivity and employee satisfaction lie at the very heart of sustaining competitive advantage in an increasingly dynamic and globalized market.

The current research adds value to the general literature on human resource management by emphasizing the importance of culturally sensitive reward systems, especially in organizations operating in diverse and multinational environments. With a workforce comprising different cultural backgrounds, Saudi Aramco will greatly benefit from the adoption of reward strategies that meet the divergent needs and values of its workforce. The study suggests that the application of a one-size-fits-all approach to rewards is not effective in such a setting, but recommends a more flexible and personalized reward system that adapts to the varying preferences within its workforce.

Another major implication drawn from the research is that reward systems need to align with the strategic objectives of the organization. Evidence from the research suggests that employees perceive a clear link between their performance and reward received as significantly enhancing motivation and productivity. For Saudi Aramco, this means the design of a system with rewards that are attractive and strategically aligned with innovation, efficiency, and sustainability goals.

The role of technology in modern reward systems is also underlined in the study. With the "digital platforms" and "AI-driven analytics", Saudi Aramco would be better placed to understand employee preferences and behaviors for the continuous fine-tuning and optimization of its reward strategies. This technological integration can support the development of a more open and engaging reward system in which employees could track performance and rewards in real-time to enhance their feeling of ownership and motivation.

However, there are some limitations to this study. The focus was almost entirely on Saudi Aramco, and while this research has been very revealing, the findings may not be generalizable, in their totality, to other organizations, especially those not operating within the oil and gas industry or outside the Arab culture. Future studies may extend this research either by testing the effects of

the reward system in other industries or by cross-cultural comparison for the purpose of learning how the different types of reward systems function across different organizations and cultures.

The current research thus helps to develop an in-depth understanding of how the reward system influences the productivity of employees within Saudi Aramco. The paper contributes to theory and practice by underlining the need for a balanced and strategically aligned reward system responsive to employees' varying needs and motivations. If Saudi Aramco implements the study recommendations, it will be able to develop its reward systems to achieve higher levels of employee productivity and satisfaction, and more general success for the organization.

It would be of paramount importance for Saudi Aramco in the future to further develop and innovate the reward systems in light of changing employee needs, technological evolution, and global trends. By accomplishing this task, the firm will be able to be not only at the forefront in its industry but also to sustain over the long term a work environment enhancing innovation, engagement, and productivity among employees.

1.7.1 Key Findings:

The research yielded several important findings, such as the fact that reward systems must be sensitive to cultures that non-financial rewards would be needed to motivate people over a longer period, and that rewards must be relevant and aligned with employees' needs and preferences.

1.7.2 Implications for Practice:

The research hence holds some very practical implications for Saudi Aramco. The adoption of a more individualized approach to reward, making effective use of technology to support this, and aligning the reward systems more closely to the corporate goals will help the firm develop a more motivated and productive workforce. This puts the firm in a very good position toward long-term sustainability against their competitors in a fiercely competitive environment.

1.7.3 Contribution to the Field:

This research also adds value to existing knowledge related to reward systems and productivity. It focuses on one major Saudi company, so the findings of this research are going to be more useful for other organizations working in comparable cultural and organizational environments.

1.7.4 Areas for Further Research:

The study thus opens up a variety of future avenues of research, such as cross-cultural analysis, longitudinal studies, and the relationship of reward systems to employee well-being. Future studies in this regard may help further enhance understanding of how effective reward systems could be designed and implemented across different organizational settings.

The bottom line of the research is that a good reward system serves to drive employees' productivity. Organizations, such as Saudi Aramco, aiming at maximum productivity gain and holding a further competitive advantage in their respective industries, need only keep a close eye on the needs and values of employees and be responsive in terms of adapting reward strategies and monitoring changes in surrounding conditions.

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