

The Impact of Rewards on the Motivation of Low- Income Employees

A Study of Short-Term and Long-Term Effects

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Abstract

This thesis examines the impact of rewards on the motivation of low-income employees and studies its short-term and long-term effects. Using a theoretical framework including Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Vroom's Expectancy Theory, Adams' Equity Theory, and Skinner's Reinforcement Theory, this research analyzes how financial and non-financial rewards affect intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among this specific group of employees. The research emphasizes the importance of meeting basic psychological needs, ensuring fairness, and maintaining transparency in reward systems for sustaining motivation over time. Through a mixed-methods approach, including a comprehensive literature review and field research using questionnaires distributed among 40 low-income employees with over ten years of experience, this study shows that while financial rewards effectively increase short-term motivation by addressing immediate economic needs, their long-term effectiveness diminishes if not accompanied by non-financial incentives. Key findings highlight the necessity of balancing intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by integrating opportunities for professional growth, recognition, and fair distribution of rewards. The research concludes by providing practical recommendations for designing sustainable reward systems, such as increasing transparency, combining financial and non-financial rewards, ensuring fairness, and supporting employees' psychological needs. These strategies are designed to enhance productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, providing valuable insights for managers and policymakers in human resource management.

Language: English

Key Words: Employee Motivation, Low-Income Employees, Reward Systems, Self-Determination Theory, Equity Theory, Expectancy Theory, Reinforcement Theory

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1 Introduction

One of the most controversial topics in the fields of human resources management and organizational behavior today is the issue of rewards and their impact on employee motivation (Prakash, 2013a). Rewards are used as tools to reinforce behaviors and increase productivity in many organizations and form an important part of organizational motivation strategies (Wei & Yazdanifard, 2014). However, numerous studies have shown that the impact of rewards on employee motivation is not always sustainable and may diminish over time or even have negative effects in some cases (Ledford et al., 2013).

One of the main concerns in choosing this topic was practical experience related to this field. From a practical and experiential perspective, it has been concluded that rewards, especially among low-income employees, have a significant impact on their motivation and performance. This group of employees, especially when seeking financial rewards, are more inclined to improve their performance and show higher motivation to participate in organizational activities. However, research shows that the impact of these types of rewards, especially financial rewards, decreases over time and may lose their initial positive effects (Antoni et al., 2017).

In this context, the main question is what strategies can be offered to maintain and increase the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of low-income employees, who are usually more sensitive to material rewards, in the long term? Can a system be designed that both meets the financial needs of this group and helps strengthen their intrinsic and sustainable motivation?

This central question forms the core foundation of this research, and the goal is to find solutions through scientific and practical research that strengthen the long-term impact of rewards and help maintain the motivation of low-income employees. In this research, the issue will be examined with a scientific and systematic approach, and the influencing factors will be identified through theoretical studies and field research. In the first phase, the research background of the related theories will be examined, and after defining the aims, analyzing the topic of the research, and drawing conclusions based on each theory, for a deeper understanding, a field survey will be conducted among organizational employees, with a special focus on the low-income employee group, as this group, due to their specific economic and occupational conditions, is most sensitive to changes in reward systems.

Examining this issue will provide a deeper understanding of the short-term and long-term effects of rewards on the motivation of this particular group of employees and provide practical results for improving motivational systems.

2 Review of the literature and theories

It is further explained that among the research and studies conducted in the field of motivation and the impact of rewards, four key theories have been identified that can be helpful in finding the answer to the main question of the research, namely the impact of rewards on the motivation of low-income employees in the long term. These theories are:

- **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** focuses on individuals' basic psychological needs and the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008a).
- **Vroom's Expectancy Theory** emphasizes the link between effort, performance, and reward (Thu & Van, 2024a).
- **Adams' Equity Theory** examines the concept of fairness and its impact on employee motivation (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012a).
- **Skinner's Reinforcement Theory** explains the role of positive and negative reinforcement in shaping behavior (Omomia & Omomia, 2014).

The primary goal of examining these theories is to develop a comprehensive theoretical framework that can explain the various aspects of how rewards influence the motivation of low-income employees. These theories will help to:

- Gain a better understanding of how financial and non-financial rewards interact with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.
- Identify factors that may lead to a decrease or sustainability of motivation in the long term.
- Analyze existing data using previous studies and apply the results to design appropriate reward systems for low-income employees.

The goal of this stage is to gain a deep understanding of the concepts, structures, and scientific findings associated with these theories. Subsequently, the relationship between each theory and the research topic will be carefully examined to determine how each can contribute to a deeper understanding of the issue and answer the research questions. Finally, based on the collected data, conclusions will be drawn.

These theories play a crucial role in shaping the conceptual framework and methodology of this research. By analyzing them, I will be able to provide appropriate solutions to the research problem based on scientific evidence and theoretical concepts.

This analysis will lead to the provision of solutions that both meet the short-term financial needs of low-income employees and maintain their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in the long term. In addition, at the end of the review of each theory related to the research topic, a conclusion from that theory along with relevant suggestions will be presented. In the final conclusion of this article, by combining the results of these theories.

2.1 Self-Determination Theory:

2.1.1 An introduction to Self-Determination Theory:

Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 2008b), examines human motivation based on empirical evidence and serves as a comprehensive framework for understanding motivation, personal development, and psychological well-being. A key point of this theory is its focus on the type and quality of motivation; rather than emphasizing only the quantity of motivation, SDT distinguishes between autonomous motivation, controlled motivation, and amotivation. This approach allows for a more accurate examination of the various effects of motivation on an individual's performance, relationships, and psychological outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008b).

The theory posits that meeting people's basic psychological needs is essential for optimizing performance and promoting psychological well-being. In other words, needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness form the foundation of intrinsic motivation, and when these needs are met, individuals are naturally drawn towards intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008b). When these needs are effectively supported, individuals naturally achieve autonomous motivation, which in turn leads to positive and significant outcomes in various areas of life, such as improved job performance, personal growth, and enhanced social relationships (Deci & Ryan, 2008b).

Furthermore, as a comprehensive theory, Self-Determination Theory emphasizes that meeting these basic needs not only increases intrinsic motivation but also contributes to feelings of satisfaction and improved quality of life. This theory helps us understand why

supporting people's emotions and psychological needs, especially in work environments, plays a vital role in improving performance and promoting psychological well-being.

Ultimately, when fundamental needs such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness are met, individuals experience greater intrinsic motivation and demonstrate better performance; this is a fundamental principle of SDT that can be used as a basis for designing effective and sustainable motivational systems (Deci & Ryan, 2008b).

In summary, Self-Determination Theory highlights the importance of meeting individuals' basic psychological needs to foster intrinsic motivation and overall well-being.

2.1.2 Theory Development

In the 1970s, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) originated from early research on the impact of external rewards on intrinsic motivation; researchers at that time investigated how external incentives could influence innate behaviors and even decrease intrinsic motivation in some cases (Deci & Ryan, 2008b). This initial perspective paved the way for the development of a broader concept in the field of human motivation.

Over the past three decades, SDT has expanded into five different sub-theories that explore various aspects of human motivation, including the impact of social environments on intrinsic motivation, the development of self-regulated extrinsic motivation, individual differences in motivational orientations, and the impact of goal content on psychological well-being and individual performance (M Van Lange Arie W Kruglanski et al., n.d.). These sub-theories allow us to analyze the different dimensions of motivation more accurately and understand the role of external and internal factors in shaping motivation.

A key point in the development of this theory is the emphasis on meeting basic psychological needs - such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness - to optimize performance and promote psychological well-being. When these needs are supported, individuals naturally move towards intrinsic motivation and demonstrate better performance (Deci & Ryan, 2008b). Supporting these needs not only promotes personal growth but also facilitates improved social interactions and increased job satisfaction.

Furthermore, the development of SDT has shown that individual differences in motivational orientations are of particular importance; in other words, everyone may react

differently to external incentives. For example, some individuals are more sensitive to intrinsic motivations, while others may prefer external motivations. Examining the impact of goal content also shows that goals that align with personal values have a positive impact on individuals' motivation and performance (M Van Lange Arie W Kruglanski et al., n.d.).

This theoretical development helps researchers and managers to design motivational systems that both meet the psychological needs of individuals and reinforce intrinsic motivation by providing appropriate external incentives, using a comprehensive framework. Ultimately, this approach can lead to improved performance, job satisfaction, and employee well-being.

In summary, the development of Self-Determination Theory, with its emphasis on meeting basic human needs and understanding the precise impact of social and individual environments on motivation, has provided a scientific and practical foundation for designing effective reward systems.

2.1.3 Applications of the SDT Theory

Self-Determination Theory has applications in various fields such as sports, education, health, and psychotherapy. For instance, in education, research has shown that supporting autonomy in classrooms can lead to increased intrinsic motivation and satisfaction of the need for competence (M Van Lange Arie W Kruglanski et al., n.d.). Additionally, in the field of health, SDT-based interventions have shown that supporting autonomy can improve health behaviors and reduce smoking (M Van Lange Arie W Kruglanski et al., n.d.).

Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory helps us understand how rewards can influence human motivation and behavior. While autonomous rewards can enhance intrinsic motivation and improve performance, controlling rewards may lead to decreased motivation and psychological well-being. Therefore, when designing reward systems, special attention should be paid to the type of reward and its impact on motivation (M Van Lange Arie W Kruglanski et al., n.d.).

Self-Determination Theory, as a grand theory of human motivation, examines the effects of social and environmental factors on human behavior and personality. This theory emphasizes the importance of supporting basic psychological needs and shows how this

support can lead to improved performance, healthy development, and psychological well-being (M Van Lange Arie W Kruglanski et al., n.d.).

2.1.4 Aims and delimitations of the SDT Theory

Self-Determination Theory is based on the principle that humans have three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met, individuals are naturally more intrinsically motivated and will perform better (Deci & Ryan, 2008b).

The primary goal of this section is to identify rewards that best meet the psychological needs of low-income employees and sustain their motivation in the long term. This analysis can help organizations design reward systems that foster intrinsic motivation and lead to lasting job satisfaction, rather than creating pressure or coercion. Additionally, given the unique needs of low-income employees, financial rewards that address their basic needs remain essential. However, it is crucial to design reward systems that not only satisfy financial needs but also stimulate extrinsic motivation. Such an approach can create an effective balance between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, ultimately leading to increased productivity, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction in the long term. which will be addressed at the end of the next section.

2.1.5 Analysing Psychological Needs and the Effects of Autonomous and Controlled Rewards on Motivation

Self-Determination Theory emphasizes basic psychological needs. The theory proposes that three core needs: **autonomy**, **competence**, and **relatedness**, underlie human motivation. When these needs are met, individuals experience greater intrinsic motivation and perform better. SDT also differentiates between two types of motivation(Deci & Ryan, 2008b):

- **Autonomous motivation:** Stemming from intrinsic interest and desire to engage in an activity.
- **Controlled motivation:** Driven by external pressures or fear of negative consequences.

The theory emphasizes that supporting autonomy and fulfilling psychological needs not only enhances intrinsic motivation but also leads to personal growth, improved performance, and psychological well-being. SDT also suggests that controlling rewards (such as purely financial rewards) may undermine intrinsic motivation, while autonomous

rewards (such as opportunities for learning and development) can foster intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008b).

To examine the impact of financial rewards on the intrinsic and controlled motivation of low-income employees from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), several key points are emphasized:

SDT suggests that controlling rewards, such as financial incentives, may decrease individuals' intrinsic motivation as these rewards undermine feelings of autonomy and shift focus from intrinsic interest and desire to the pursuit of the reward. However, among low-income employees, financial rewards play a dual role (Deci & Ryan, 2008b). On the one hand, due to economic constraints, this group has a greater need for financial rewards to meet their basic needs. On the other hand, the fear of negative consequences for not receiving a reward (such as reduced income or feeling overlooked) can act as a controlled motivational factor, driving individuals to work harder (Yousaf et al., 2014c).

Numerous studies have been conducted in this area, which will be discussed in detail, and finally, a conclusion will be provided based on the findings of this research.

2.1.5.1 Positive Impact of Financial Rewards on Low-Income Employees in the Short Term:

A study by (A. T., Z. Y. Landry, 2020) revealed that low-income employees exhibit higher sensitivity to rewards due to their greater financial dependence. This research found that providing regular financial rewards can increase controlled motivation and improve short-term performance. However, if the reward is consistently tied to performance, it may lead to a decrease in intrinsic motivation, as employees focus solely on earning the reward (A. T., Z. Y. Landry, 2020).

Let's delve into some of these points:

- **Financial Dependence and Sensitivity to Rewards:** Studies show that low-income employees exhibit higher sensitivity to rewards due to their greater financial dependence. In other words, these employees, due to economic needs and financial pressures, view financial rewards as a vital source for meeting their basic needs. This dependency can lead to increased motivation and effort at work (Yousaf et al., 2014b).
- **Impact on Short-Term Performance:** Financial rewards can effectively increase employees' short-term performance. For instance, a study by (A. T., Z. Y. Landry, 2020)

found that providing regular financial rewards can boost controlled motivation and improve short-term performance. These rewards give employees the sense that their efforts are directly linked to financial gains, which can lead to increased productivity and efficiency (A. T., Z. Y. Landry, 2020).

- **Creating Motivation for Greater Effort:** Financial rewards can serve as a strong motivational factor. Low-income employees may be driven to exert greater effort due to fear of negative consequences for not receiving a reward (such as reduced income or feeling overlooked). While this type of motivation may increase productivity in the short term, it can lead to job burnout in the long term (Yousaf et al., 2014c).
- **Impact on Job Satisfaction:** Financial rewards can contribute to increased job satisfaction among employees. In one study, 52% of respondents emphasized that financial rewards and recognition can boost motivation and improve job satisfaction (Prakash, 2013c). This satisfaction can, in turn, lead to lower turnover rates and increased organizational loyalty (Prakash, 2013c).
- **Impact on Morale and Organizational Culture:** Financial rewards can contribute to improving employee morale and fostering a positive organizational culture. When employees feel that their efforts are valued and appreciated, it can lead to increased cooperation and positive interactions among team members (Yousaf et al., 2014c).

2.1.5.2 Dependency on Controlled Motivation and Long-Term Consequences:

(Kisseloff, 2011a) pointed out in a study that in work environments with controlling financial rewards, low-income employees typically work with the motivation of fear of not receiving a reward or losing financial security. This type of motivation, although it may increase productivity in the short term, may lead to job burnout or decreased satisfaction in the long term, as employees feel that their **autonomy** and **self-determination** have diminished (Kisseloff, 2011). Some of these points will be examined in the following:

- **Controlled Motivation and Fear of Negative Consequences:** (Kisseloff, 2011a) noted in a study that low-income employees often work with the motivation of fear of not receiving a reward or losing financial security. This type of motivation is known as controlled motivation, where an individual engages in tasks due to external pressures (such as fear of not receiving a reward). While this type of motivation may temporarily increase productivity, as employees exert greater effort due to fear of negative consequences, it can have negative long-term effects (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

- **Decreased Sense of Autonomy:** One negative consequence of relying on controlled motivation is a decrease in employees' sense of autonomy. When employees feel that their behavior and performance are solely measured based on financial rewards, they may feel that their freedom of action and autonomy have diminished. This feeling can lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased burnout. Employees may feel like they are working in a controlled and restrictive system where they have no freedom to choose or make decisions (Deci & Ryan, 2008).
- **Burnout and Decreased Satisfaction:** Research shows that reliance on controlled motivation can lead to job burnout. Employees who are constantly under pressure to achieve financial rewards may eventually experience exhaustion and disinterest in their work. This burnout can lead to decreased work quality and increased turnover rates. Additionally, decreased job satisfaction can lead to decreased employee commitment to the organization and increased dissatisfaction (M Van Lange Arie W Kruglanski et al., n.d.).
- **Impact on Interpersonal Relationships:** Controlled motivation can also negatively impact interpersonal relationships in the workplace. When employees are under pressure to achieve financial rewards, they may resort to competition and selfish behaviors instead of cooperating and interacting positively with colleagues. This can lead to decreased team spirit and a negative work environment (M Van Lange Arie W Kruglanski et al., n.d.).

2.1.5.3 Relevance to Low-Income Employees in the Long Term

For low-income employees, financial rewards serve as a powerful motivator in addition to meeting economic needs. However:

- **In the short term,** financial rewards have a positive impact on effort and performance due to meeting economic needs and creating controlled motivation (A. T., Z. Y. Landry, 2020).
- **In the long term,** excessive reliance on these types of rewards may lead to a decrease in intrinsic motivation, as employees feel that their behavior and performance are solely measured based on financial rewards (Kisseloff, 2011a).

2.1.5.4 Conclusion of STD theory

Studies have shown that financial rewards can have a positive impact on the motivation and performance of low-income employees in the short term, as this group has a greater

need for financial security (Landry, 2020a). For many low-income employees, these rewards are not only seen as a motivational tool but also as a vital necessity for survival and meeting living expenses. Receiving regular financial rewards can increase feelings of economic security and lead employees to be more committed to their work. Additionally, research has shown that increasing the amount of financial rewards can boost productivity in the short term, as employees work harder to achieve these rewards (Yousaf et al., 2014c). This is particularly evident in environments where low-income employees have limited opportunities to improve their economic conditions.

However, in the long term, excessive reliance on financial rewards can decrease intrinsic motivation and lead to various negative consequences (Kisseloff, 2011a). Research suggests that if employees work solely for financial gain, they gradually lose their intrinsic interest in their tasks and become more dependent on these rewards. This dependency can lead employees to be motivated only when receiving rewards, and their productivity can decline significantly if rewards are reduced or eliminated. Additionally, creating unhealthy competition in the workplace, reducing cooperation among employees, and increasing stress due to the fear of losing rewards are other consequences of excessive reliance on controlled motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008b). These factors can lead to job burnout, decreased organizational commitment, and even increased turnover rates in the long term.

Therefore, it is essential for organizations to consider factors other than financial rewards when designing reward systems, such as opportunities for professional growth, participation in organizational decision-making, and public recognition of employee performance (Hennessey, 2015; Pandya, 2024). Research shows that combining financial rewards with other non-financial incentives can have a more sustainable impact on employee motivation. For example, employees who, in addition to receiving financial rewards, have opportunities for career advancement and learning new skills, not only have greater motivation to work but also experience a greater sense of value and satisfaction. On the other hand, creating an organizational culture where employee efforts are recognized can increase feelings of organizational belonging and improve relationships among employees.

This research shows that the balance between intrinsic and controlled motivation plays a crucial role in the sustainability of motivation among low-income employees (Deci & Ryan, 2008b). Although financial rewards are essential for meeting the basic needs of this group,

they should not be the only motivational factor (Kisseloff, 2011a). To maintain motivation in the long term, organizations should create a reward system that, in addition to providing financial security, also meets the psychological needs of employees and strengthens their feelings of autonomy, competence, and belonging (Yousaf et al., 2014c). Creating such a system can lead to increased sustainable productivity, reduced turnover rates, and improved job satisfaction for employees, ultimately benefiting both the organization and the workforce (Landry, 2020a; Pandya, 2024; Prakash, 2013d).

Therefore, based on the conclusions drawn from self-determination theory, the following is recommended to increase the positive long-term effects of financial rewards and combine them with autonomous rewards:

- Providing opportunities for professional growth and learning (Pandya, 2024).
- Involving employees in organizational decision-making (Rachmawati, 2024a).
- Recognizing their efforts and performance through public appreciation and recognition (Hennessey, 2015).

2.2 Vroom's Expectancy Theory:

2.2.1 An introduction to Vroom's Expectancy Theory

Vroom's Expectancy Theory, introduced by Victor Vroom in the 1960s, is one of the most important motivational theories in the field of management and organizational behavior. This theory is based on the principle that individuals, when choosing their behaviors, pay attention to the expectations they have of the outcomes of those behaviors. In other words, people tend to choose behaviors that lead to more desirable outcomes. Vroom introduced this theory with three main components: **Expectancy, Instrumentality, and Valence** (Suciu et al., n.d.-a).

- **Expectancy:** This component refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully complete a task. In other words, does the individual believe that their effort will lead to successful performance?
- **Instrumentality:** This component refers to the link between performance and outcomes. Does the individual believe that their good performance will lead to specific rewards?

- **Valence:** This component refers to the attractiveness or value of rewards to the individual. Does the individual value the expected rewards?

Numerous studies have been conducted on Vroom's Expectancy Theory, examining its impact on employee motivation and performance. For instance, some studies have shown a positive correlation between employees' expectations and their performance, and this relationship can lead to improved work quality and increased motivation (Suciu et al., n.d.-a).

In this regard, research has shown that non-financial rewards such as recognition and appreciation can be as effective as financial rewards in motivating employees (Ph & Washington, n.d.). Additionally, the impacts of Expectancy Theory on employee motivation and performance have been clearly observed in various fields such as education and public service (Suciu et al., n.d.-a).

Ultimately, given the importance of Vroom's Expectancy Theory in understanding human behavior in work settings, this research can serve as a practical guide for managers and decision-makers in designing effective motivational and reward strategies.

2.2.2 Aims and delimitations of the Vroom's Expectancy Theory:

This part of the research aims to investigate whether low-income employees are more motivated to exert greater effort when rewarded. Additionally, it will examine the relationship between rewards and performance compared to other employees in the organization. Given the long-term focus of this study, work experience will be a significant factor in the analysis. Employees with more experience may have different expectations of rewards (Prakash, 2013b), a better understanding of the relationship between effort and reward (Safiullah, 2014), and a higher intrinsic motivation for long-term efforts compared to new employees (Yousaf et al., 2014a). Therefore, this study will specifically examine the combined effects of experience and rewards on effort and performance to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the motivation of low-income employees over time.

Furthermore, it is crucial to design a reward system that meets the expectations of low-income employees, both in terms of performance and effort. Given the financial needs of low-income employees, there is a risk that they may be primarily motivated by financial

rewards. This could potentially decrease intrinsic motivation in the long term. Therefore, the reward system should be designed to not only meet the financial needs of these employees but also foster intrinsic motivation. Such an approach can create a more sustainable and effective motivation system. which will be addressed at the end of the next section.

2.2.3 Examining the relationship between effort, performance, and reward.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory, introduced by Victor Vroom in the 1960s, is one of the most important motivational theories in the field of management and organizational behavior. This theory states that individuals in the workplace make behavioral choices based on their expectations of the outcomes. In other words, people choose behaviors that they believe will lead to desirable outcomes (Thu & Van, 2024b).

This theory consists of three main components:

- **Expectancy:** An individual's belief that their effort will lead to successful performance.
- **Instrumentality:** An individual's belief that successful performance will lead to a specific reward.
- **Valence:** The degree of importance that an individual places on the expected reward.

This theory suggests that employee motivation depends on the extent to which they believe in the connection between effort, performance, and reward. Therefore, if individuals believe that their effort will lead to specific results and that these results are valuable, they will be more motivated to perform better. Vroom's expectancy theory helps managers design effective motivational systems that accurately reflect the needs and expectations of employees (Thu & Van, 2024b).

2.2.3.1 Examine the long-term impact of rewards on low-income employees based on Vroom's

To examine the long-term impact of rewards on low-income employees based on Vroom's Expectancy Theory, the three main components of this theory will be analyzed in relation to the research topic: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. This analysis specifically focuses on the expectations of low-income employees and their related motivational factors in the long term.

- **The Expectancy Component:**

Impact of Tenure on Reward Expectations: A study conducted by (Prakash, 2013) revealed that employees with more tenure have higher expectations of reward systems. In work environments, low-income employees, as their tenure increases, often expect their experience and effort to be reflected in the level of rewards they receive. This is because tenure is typically seen as an indicator of competence and commitment (Prakash, 2013).

In another study, (Safiullah, 2014) noted that among low-income employees, tenure can lead to increased confidence in performance, as this group expects their consistent efforts to be rewarded with increased pay or financial incentives. If organizations fail to meet these expectations, employee motivation may decrease (Safiullah, 2014).

➤ **The Instrumentality Component:**

Expectation of Rewards for Extra Work: The instrumentality component in Vroom's expectancy theory refers to employees' beliefs about the link between performance and receiving rewards. In the long term, low-income employees may come to believe that any effort or task beyond their job description should be compensated with financial rewards. (Yousaf et al., 2014c) demonstrated in their research that low-income employees working in environments where rewards are directly linked to performance have higher motivation to perform extra tasks. However, if organizations do not manage this belief correctly and leave additional efforts of employees unrewarded, trust in the instrumentality of the system decreases and employee motivation diminishes over time (Yousaf et al., 2014b).

➤ **The Valence Component:**

Importance of Financial Rewards for Low-Income Employees: Numerous studies have confirmed that financial rewards hold the greatest value for low-income employees. For this group, financial rewards not only meet basic needs but are also seen as a sign of organizational appreciation. A study by (Manzoor et al., 2021) showed that low-income employees place more importance on financial rewards as a motivational factor compared to higher-income employees. This study also demonstrated that this importance remains stable in the long term, as financial rewards continue to be a powerful motivator for this group (Manzoor et al., 2021).

2.2.3.2 Conclusion of Vroom's Expectancy Theory

Analyzing Vroom's expectancy theory in the context of low-income employees shows that all three components of this theory need proper management in the long term. Low-income employees typically expect their received rewards to increase with their years of service (Prakash, 2013d). This expectation arises because experience and work history are usually associated with increased skills, improved performance, and increased productivity. If these advancements are not recognized in the form of tangible rewards, it can lead to dissatisfaction and decreased motivation (Prakash, 2013d).

Furthermore, employees believe that the more effort and work they put in, the more rewards they should receive. This concept is addressed in the instrumentality component of Vroom's expectancy theory, where employees expect that better performance, and more work will directly lead to receiving higher rewards (Yousaf et al., 2014c). However, if this connection is not properly established, that is, if employees see that their increased effort and performance have not led to increased rewards, the likelihood of decreased motivation and feelings of injustice increases (Yousaf et al., 2014c).

On the other hand, rewards are seen not only as a financial incentive but also as a sign of organizational appreciation (Manzoor et al., 2021). When employees feel that the organization values their efforts and that rewards are provided as an affirmation of their positive performance, their organizational commitment increases. Conversely, if employees feel that rewards are distributed mechanically and without regard to actual performance, they may feel that their efforts are being ignored, and their motivation may decrease (Manzoor et al., 2021).

Therefore, to maintain motivation in the long term, it is essential that the organizational reward system clearly demonstrates how years of service, level of effort, and employee value creation are reflected in the number of rewards they receive. Otherwise, employees may conclude that greater effort has no positive impact on their position and benefits, and ultimately, organizational productivity will decrease.

To improve reward systems in the long term, it is recommended to:

- **Transparency in reward systems:** Employees should understand how their effort and tenure impact their level of reward (S., & P. S. Shortland, 2016).

- **Combined rewards:** In addition to financial rewards, providing opportunities such as job promotion or training can strengthen employees' intrinsic motivation (Oluwatoyin Irefin, 2023).
- **Linking performance to rewards:** Organizations should strengthen the direct link between performance and reward and prevent any gaps in this relationship (Thu & Van, 2024b).

2.3 Adams' Equity Theory:

2.3.1 Introduction to Equity Theory

Equity theory, introduced by John Stacey Adams in the 1960s, examines human feelings and behaviors in the context of social exchanges. This theory is based on the principle that individuals in work and social settings compare their inputs (such as effort, time, and resources) to their outputs (such as pay, benefits, and recognition) with others. If an individual feels that the ratio of their inputs to outputs is unfair compared to others, they may experience feelings of dissatisfaction, anger, or guilt, and consequently change their behavior to restore balance (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012b).

Adams' initial research on this theory focused on how perceived inequities affect employees' behaviors and motivation. Adams (1965) stated that individuals, when feeling inequity, may reduce their inputs (decrease effort) or increase their outputs (request a raise) (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012b). This theory has been widely used in various fields such as human resource management, organizational psychology, and organizational behavior.

Subsequent research has shown that perceived inequities can have negative effects on job satisfaction, motivation, and employee performance. For example, studies have shown that employees who feel that their pay is unfair compared to their colleagues may have lower motivation to work, resulting in decreased performance (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012b). Additionally, perceived inequities can lead to negative behaviors such as workplace theft or job turnover (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012b).

Given the importance of rewards in creating motivation and job satisfaction, a deeper understanding of equity theory can help managers design more effective reward systems

that not only improve employee performance but also foster feelings of fairness and equity among them (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012b).

Adams' equity theory, as a strong theoretical framework, helps us better understand human behavior in work settings. Given the profound effects of perceived inequities on motivation and performance, examining the relationship between this theory and reward systems can help improve human resource management and increase employee job satisfaction.

2.3.2 Aims and delimitations of the Adams' Equity Theory:

The aim of this theory is to better understand how fairness can be maintained in reward systems. Low-income employees constantly compare their efforts and achievements to the rewards they receive, and the rewards received by their colleagues. In many cases, these comparisons can lead to feelings of unfairness, especially when employees feel that their efforts are not valued enough or that colleagues with similar job levels receive higher rewards.

This sensitivity is amplified among low-income employees due to several factors, including the importance of financial rewards in meeting basic life needs and their lower position in the organization. Therefore, designing a system that can maintain fairness among employees, especially low-income employees, is essential. This fairness should be considered not only in the amount and type of rewards but also in the distribution process and transparency of reward systems.

To achieve this goal, this research delves deeper into the sense of fairness among low-income employees and analyzes how this feeling affects their motivation. which will be addressed at the end of the next section.

2.3.3 Focusing on Fairness in Reward Systems and Its Impact on Motivation

Adams' Equity Theory, introduced by John Stacey Adams in the 1960s, is a key motivational theory in the field of management and organizational behavior. This theory is based on the principle that individuals in the workplace compare their inputs (such as time, effort, and skills) and outputs (such as pay, benefits, and recognition) to those of others. This comparison is usually made with colleagues or other people in the organization. If

individuals feel that the ratio of their inputs to outputs is fair compared to others, they experience greater satisfaction and their motivation is strengthened. However, if they feel that there is an injustice, they may exhibit negative behaviors such as reduced effort, job dissatisfaction, or even quitting their job (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012b). This theory emphasizes that the perception of fairness and equity in reward systems is a key factor in maintaining employee motivation and commitment and can have a significant impact on their performance and behavior (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012b).

2.3.3.1 Examining the issue of low-income employees in the long term from the perspective of Adams' Equity

Examining the issue of low-income employees in the long term from the perspective of Adams' Equity Theory shows that the perception of fairness in reward systems plays a vital role in the motivation and job satisfaction of this group. Here, the issue will be analyzed from three main aspects: social comparison, the feeling of long-term injustice, and the consequences of reduced motivation.

2.3.3.2 Social Comparison and Its Impact on Perceived Fairness

Adams' Equity Theory suggests that employees compare their input and outputs with others. In organizations, low-income employees, who often occupy lower-level positions, may feel that the ratio of their effort to reward is unfair when they see the rewards received by higher-income employees (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012b).

A study by (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012b) showed that employees who feel their efforts are not adequately compensated experience job dissatisfaction and decreased motivation. This is particularly true for low-income employees, as they usually work longer hours, and their rewards are lower relative to their workload. Negative social comparisons with higher-income employees can increase feelings of injustice over the long term (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012b).

2.3.3.3 Long-Term Feelings of Injustice and Decreased Motivation

In the long term, low-income employees who feel that the rewards they receive are not commensurate with their efforts are more likely to experience a decrease in motivation. A study conducted by (Seipel, 2009) showed that in unfair reward systems, low-income employees are more susceptible to reduced productivity because they feel that the organization does not value them (Seipel, 2009).

This issue becomes more apparent when low-income employees witness individuals with less responsibility or effort receiving greater rewards. This feeling of injustice can lead to behaviors such as reduced effort, protest, or even quitting the job (Seipel, 2009).

2.3.3.4 Consequences of Decreased Motivation in Unfair Reward

Feelings of injustice arising from social comparisons and unfair distribution of rewards can have the following consequences:

- **Decreased Organizational Commitment:** A study by (Wiswanatha Mada, 2017) showed that employees who perceive the reward system as unfair have lower commitment to the organization (Wiswanatha Mada, 2017).
- **Decreased Productivity:** Research by (Luo Danxia x, 2024) confirmed that dissatisfaction resulting from injustice leads to decreased productivity and even job turnover in the long term (Luo Danxia x, 2024).
- **Increased Negative Behaviors:** Employees who feel their efforts are not adequately compensated may exhibit behaviors such as reduced quality of work, protest, or job seeking (Chih, 2017).

2.3.3.5 Conclusion of Adams' Equity Theory

According to Adam's Equity Theory, fairness in reward systems plays a crucial role in maintaining employee motivation and commitment. Low-income employees typically work longer hours and have heavier responsibilities compared to others. However, comparing their rewards with those of employees at higher organizational levels, who may appear to put in less effort, can strengthen feelings of unfairness. In the long term, this has many negative consequences, including decreased productivity, reduced job satisfaction, and an increased likelihood of leaving the job.

Low-income employees may eventually conclude that their efforts are not being recognized. This feeling is exacerbated when they observe that individuals with similar or even lower job positions receive higher rewards, or those with fewer responsibilities enjoy more benefits. Such dissatisfaction can increase the gap between employees and management and jeopardize the organizational climate.

In conclusion, Adam's Equity Theory emphasizes that a sense of fairness in reward systems is a key factor in maintaining employee motivation and job satisfaction. Among low-income employees, who are often more sensitive to unfairness, this feeling directly impacts their

productivity, commitment, and behavior. Transparent implementing fair, transparent, and effort-based reward systems can help improve the motivation and job satisfaction of this group and put the organization on a path of development and sustainability.

To prevent the negative consequences of perceived injustice, organizations can take the following steps:

- **Transparency in reward systems:** Employees should understand how rewards are calculated and distributed. This transparency can foster a sense of fairness (S., & P. S. Shortland, 2016).
- **Performance-based rewards:** Ensure that rewards are distributed fairly based on employees' effort and performance (Topa, 2016).
- **Provide opportunities for growth:** Creating opportunities for learning and career advancement for low-income employees can increase their sense of value (Anku, 2018).

2.4 Skinner's Reinforcement Theory:

2.4.1 Introduction to Reinforcement Theory

Skinner's reinforcement theory, recognized as one of the foundational theories of behaviorism, is based on the principles of behaviorism, and particularly the concept of reinforcement. Developed by B.F. Skinner, a renowned American psychologist, this theory examines how behaviors are learned and how the environment influences them. Skinner believed that human and animal behavior is influenced by its consequences, which can be either positive or negative. In other words, behaviors that are associated with rewards are more likely to be repeated, while behaviors associated with punishment or negative consequences are less likely to be repeated (Austin Omomia et al., 2014).

2.4.2 Skinner defined four main types of reinforcement:

- **Positive Reinforcement:** Providing a reward or positive consequence to increase the likelihood of a behavior being repeated.
- **Negative Reinforcement:** Removing an aversive stimulus after a behavior to increase the likelihood of that behavior being repeated.

- **Punishment:** Using negative consequences to decrease the likelihood of a behavior being repeated.
- **Extinction:** Removing previous reinforcements to decrease behavior.

This theory is particularly used in work environments to design reward and motivation systems, where positive reinforcement (such as financial rewards or recognition) can strengthen desired behaviors and lead to improved performance (Omomia, 2014).

Skinner's reinforcement theory, as a scientific approach in psychology, especially in the fields of education and management, has had a profound impact. This theory is widely used in schools and organizations to manage behavior and improve performance. Skinner emphasized the importance of positive and negative reinforcement in his work and believed that positive reinforcement, such as rewards and encouragement, can contribute to improved learning and behavior (Omomia, 2014).

In various research studies, the effects of reinforcement on learning and behavior have been examined. For example, in educational settings, the use of positive reinforcement to encourage students to exhibit desirable behaviors and effective learning has been recognized as a key strategy (Omomia, 2014). Additionally, in the field of management, reinforcement theory helps managers use rewards and punishments to manage employee behavior and improve their performance (Omomia, 2014).

Ultimately, Skinner's reinforcement theory remains a focus of research and application as both a scientific theory in psychology and a practical tool in behavior management and learning. It can contribute to improving educational and managerial processes.

2.4.3 Aims and delimitations of the Skinner's Reinforcement Theory:

This part of the research aims to identify factors that can sustain the positive reinforcement effects of rewards in the long term. In this regard, aspects such as transparency in reward provision, the alignment of rewards with performance, and the consistency of reward systems will be examined. Alongside these factors, this research delves deeper into the concepts of positive and negative reinforcement. It will explore how these two types of reinforcement can individually or combined influence the motivation of low-income employees and the long-term differences in their effectiveness. Additionally, this research studies the impact of reward extinction. The termination or reduction of rewards,

especially among low-income employees who heavily rely on financial incentives, can have profound negative effects on motivation and performance. This part of the research will examine how the removal or alteration of rewards can affect employee behaviour and what factors may help mitigate these negative impacts. The primary objective of this section is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the short-term and long-term effects of positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and reward extinction on low-income employees. This analysis can help explain the relationship between these factors and employee motivation in various work environments and provide a scientific foundation for offering practical solutions in the continuation of the research.

2.4.4 Examining the Role of Rewards as Positive Reinforcement

Skinner's Reinforcement Theory, introduced by B.F. Skinner within the framework of behaviorism, is based on the principle that human behavior is dependent on the consequences it receives. This theory states that behaviors that are reinforced with positive consequences are more likely to be repeated in the future, while behaviors that have negative consequences are likely to decrease or stop (Omomia, 2014). As discussed in the background of this theory, Skinner's theory defines four main types of reinforcement. When analyzing the long-term situation of low-income employees based on Skinner's reinforcement theory, it becomes evident that the positive and negative consequences of using reinforcement, especially in financial reward systems, can have a significant impact on the motivation and behavior of this group. In the following, the issue will be examined from the perspective of positive and negative reinforcement and its long-term consequences. (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2003).

2.4.4.1 Positive Reinforcement: Rewards and Repetition of Desired Behaviors

Financial rewards, as one of the most common forms of positive reinforcement, can strengthen desired employee behaviors and increase the likelihood of these behaviors being repeated. A study conducted by (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2003) showed that providing financial rewards can significantly increase employee productivity in the short term. Low-income employees, who have a greater need for financial rewards to meet their basic needs, are more sensitive to this type of reinforcement (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2003).

Research by (Wang, 2016) also showed that low-income employees, when rewarded for good performance, are more motivated to repeat positive behaviors. This positive

reinforcement leads to increased productivity and job satisfaction in the short term (Wang, 2016).

2.4.4.2 Negative Reinforcement: Fear of Losing Rewards

In reward systems, negative reinforcement occurs when employees exert more effort to avoid negative consequences, such as a reduction or removal of rewards. Among low-income employees, this fear of losing rewards can lead to increased effort but also has negative impacts on intrinsic motivation and long-term productivity.

A study by (Deci & Ryan, 2008b) showed that negative reinforcement can decrease intrinsic motivation, as employees feel pressured to perform. This is especially risky for low-income employees, as they may continue positive behaviors not because of interest or satisfaction, but due to coercion or fear (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

2.4.4.3 Long-term Consequences: Decreased Intrinsic Motivation and Job Burnout

In the long term, relying on financial rewards as the sole form of reinforcement can have the following negative consequences for low-income employees:

- **Decreased Intrinsic Motivation:** According to Skinner's theory, if behavior is reinforced solely based on financial rewards, employees' intrinsic motivation will decrease over time as individuals no longer perform behaviors for intrinsic reasons. Research by (Deci & Ryan, 2008b) showed that excessive reliance on financial rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008b)
- **Job Burnout:** The constant effort to maintain or increase rewards, especially in stressful work environments, can lead to job burnout and decreased productivity. A study by (Maslach & Leiter, 2016) showed that employees who are under pressure to maintain rewards experience more stress and burnout in the long term (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

2.4.4.4 Conclusion of Skinner's Reinforcement Theory

Based on Skinner's reinforcement theory, financial rewards, as one of the most effective tools of positive reinforcement, can have positive short-term impacts on the behavior and performance of low-income employees. These rewards, due to their importance in meeting basic needs and improving quality of life, not only strengthen desired behaviors but also increase employees' sense of appreciation and value, contributing to improved

commitment and productivity. In fact, low-income employees, when receiving financial rewards, are more motivated to repeat their positive behaviors, which can lead to improved organizational performance in the short term.

However, this approach may create significant challenges in the long term, especially if reward systems are not managed properly. One of the main challenges is an over-reliance on negative reinforcement, where employees are under constant pressure to perform better to avoid the removal or reduction of rewards. This type of pressure can lead to a decrease in intrinsic motivation as employees no longer perform behaviors due to interest, satisfaction, or passion, but solely to avoid negative consequences. This situation can have extensive negative consequences in the long term, including decreased productivity, increased job stress, and even job burnout (Deci & Ryan, 2008b).

Job burnout is one of the most significant consequences of reward systems that focus solely on financial reinforcement. Employees who are constantly under pressure to maintain their rewards often experience feelings of demotivation and exhaustion. Related research, such as studies by (Maslach & Leiter, 2016), has shown that these constant pressures not only lead to decreased job satisfaction but can also drive employees to leave their jobs or reduce their commitment to the organization (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

To avoid these challenges and maintain long-term motivation, organizations should design more comprehensive reward systems that not only include financial rewards but also strengthen employees' intrinsic motivation. Combining financial rewards with non-financial rewards, such as learning opportunities and promotions, can help reduce employees' dependence on financial reinforcement and enhance their sense of autonomy and competence. Additionally, transparency in reward processes is also crucial. Employees should understand how their effort and performance are evaluated and how these evaluations lead to rewards. Ultimately, to achieve sustainable productivity and create a healthy and motivating work environment, organizations should avoid over-reliance on financial rewards. Designing a reward system that also considers psychological factors such as autonomy, competence, and equity can help create sustainable motivation, increase job satisfaction, and improve the performance of low-income employees. Such a system not only provides short-term benefits but also leads to the retention of employee commitment and productivity in the long term.

To prevent the negative consequences and strengthen the motivation of low-income employees in the long term, the following actions are suggested:

- **Combining Positive Reinforcement with Non-Financial Rewards:** Offering non-financial rewards, such as learning opportunities or career advancement, can enhance intrinsic motivation (Oluwatoyin Ireferin, 2023).
- **Creating Transparency in Reward Systems:** Employees should understand how their effort and performance impact their rewards. This transparency can increase a sense of fairness and prevent a decline in motivation (S. Shortland & Perkins, 2016).
- **Reducing Reliance on Negative Reinforcement:** Avoiding the implicit threat of reducing rewards and focusing more on positive reinforcement can reduce feelings of coercion and create sustainable productivity (Obasa, 2015).

Now, the long-term effects of rewards on low-income employees have been examined using four theories: self-determination theory, expectancy-value theory, Adams' equity theory, and Skinner's reinforcement theory. Although there are numerous studies and theories in the field of motivation and reward, these four theories were chosen because their conditions are close to the environment and geography of the low-income employees examined in this research. These individuals usually work for minimum wage, and in many cases, their income is not even enough to meet their basic needs; therefore, this group considers rewards beyond a simple job perk and sees them as a key factor in improving their living conditions. The analysis of these theories has led to the presentation of solutions and suggestions to improve these conditions. In the following, the subject will also be evaluated from various field perspectives, and after summarizing the field study, a general conclusion will be obtained. At the end of this research, an effort will be made to provide practical solutions for designing reward systems that can increase the motivation of low-income employees in the long term and have a lasting impact.

3 Field Research

To better understand the research topic and assess whether the theoretical findings from various theories align with reality in work environments, a field study using questionnaires was conducted. The purpose of this research is to collect real data from low-income employees to accurately examine the impact of rewards on motivation, performance, and the sense of fairness in the distribution of incentives (Anfara, 2013a).

3.1 Field Research: Questionnaire Design and Implementation

To collect real data and accurately examine the impact of rewards on the motivation of low-income employees, a questionnaire method was used as one of the main tools of field research (Cheema, 2014). These questionnaires are specifically designed to identify the relationship between rewards, motivation, and employee performance. The purpose of designing this tool is to obtain real views and experiences of low-income employees about reward systems and their impact on their behavior and performance. For this purpose, standard motivation questionnaires such as the "Job Satisfaction Survey" or "Motivational Scale" were used. These questionnaires are a suitable tool for evaluating various dimensions of motivation and by adapting them to the specific needs and conditions examined in the thesis, they were able to contribute to more accurate and relevant results (Sleimi & Davut, 2015).

In this step, the standard questionnaires were first reviewed and their dimensions were adapted to the research context. This localization made it possible to ensure that the collected data would be a true reflection of the experiences and opinions of this group.

Also, the questionnaire is designed in such a way that it can both evaluate the impact of rewards on motivation from various aspects and provide the possibility of accurate analysis of quantitative data. The use of multiple-choice questions in the form of Likert scales and open-ended questions helped to create a comprehensive and effective tool (Anfara, 2013a).

To achieve more accurate and practical results, these questionnaires were distributed among 40 low-income employees, i.e., with a minimum base salary and a history of more than ten years, in three different companies in the fields of air conditioning, compressed air industries, and food industries in Iran. This selection was made due to the diversity of work environments and the economic conditions of the employees, as well as the different methods of dealing with and managing them, so that the research findings could be more widely generalizable. The questionnaires included questions about the type of rewards received, their impact on motivation and performance, and employees' feelings about fairness in the distribution of rewards.

This tool helped to identify behavioral patterns and attitudes of low-income employees towards reward systems, in addition to quantitative data evaluation. The data obtained

from these questionnaires will be used as a basis for further analysis and designing more efficient reward systems, which we will discuss later (Anfara, 2013a).

3.1.1 Questionnaire Objectives:

The questionnaire aims to collect data that can answer the following research questions:

- **The impact of rewards on motivation and performance:** Do low-income employees become more motivated to improve their performance when they receive rewards (Manzoor et al., 2021)?
- **The sustainability of rewards' impact in the long term:** Do the motivational effects of rewards decrease over time (Prakash, 2013c)?
- **Types of rewards:** Which type of reward (financial or non-financial) has a greater impact on the motivation of low-income employees (Valerie L. Kisseloff, 2011)?
- **Perceived fairness:** Do low-income employees perceive the rewards they receive as fair (Afifah Ramadhani Herzoni, 2024)?

3.1.2 Questionnaire Structure

The questionnaire will consist of several sections:

- **Demographic Information:** Collecting basic information such as age, gender.
- **Motivational Factors:** Questions to measure various motivational factors, such as:
 - Effort and performance
 - Job satisfaction
 - Intention to stay in the organization
- **Perceived Fairness:** Questions to assess employees' perceptions of fairness in reward systems.

3.1.3 Questionnaire Distribution Method

Questionnaires were distributed online or in person among employees of different companies. To ensure the accuracy and honesty of the responses:

- The collected information was recorded anonymously.
- Participants were informed of the research objective and how the data would be used.

3.1.4 Number of Questions and Questionnaire Method:

In the field research section, a questionnaire consisting of 13 questions has been designed. The Likert scale method has been used to measure the participants' viewpoints. The response options for this questionnaire are as follows: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, 4 = strongly agree, and 5 = no opinion. This scale allows for accurate evaluation of employees' attitudes and experiences towards various aspects of motivation and the impact of rewards in the workplace. Through quantitative analysis, it is possible to examine the relationship between questions and motivational indicators. The use of this method helps to extract valid data and provides practical recommendations for improving long-term reward systems for low-income employees.

As mentioned, these questions were distributed among 40 low-income employees, i.e., with a minimum base salary and a history of more than ten years, in three different companies in the fields of air conditioning, compressed air industries, and food industries in Iran.

3.1.5 Table of Designed Questions:

Num	Question/Statement	Response Scale
1	I naturally enjoy performing my job duties.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
2	My interests are the main factors driving me to strive for the best performance at work.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
3	Doing things for satisfaction and personal interest is very important to me.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
4	Appreciation from managers increases my desire to improve performance.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
5	Receiving financial rewards from the organization plays an important role in increasing my productivity.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
6	The organization's financial rewards motivate me to pursue my career goals with more effort.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
7	I am completely satisfied with my current working conditions.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□

8	My work environment increases my motivation to deliver the best performance.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
9	I feel that I am recognized as a valuable person in the organization.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
10	I feel that my efforts and performance are fairly appreciated in the organization.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
11	The way incentives and appreciation are distributed in the organization is transparent and fair.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
12	I believe that the organization responds fairly to my efforts.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□
13	I believe that having a regular incentive system helps to increase my efforts and improve my work performance.	1□ – 2□ – 3□ – 4□ – 5□

Table 1- Questions

3.2 Grouping Questions Based on Theories:

To match the data with the theories, the questions are divided into four categories related to each theory:

Self-Determination Theory (SDT): Intrinsic Motivation and Psychological Needs

Related Questions: Questions 1, 2, and 3

- These questions refer to the dimensions of natural enjoyment of work, personal interest, and inner satisfaction, which, from the perspective of self-determination theory, indicate intrinsic motivation. SDT states that when basic psychological needs such as autonomy and competence are met, individuals experience more intrinsic motivation and perform better. In other words, positive answers to these questions can indicate that employees' basic needs are met and their intrinsic motivation is improved.

Vroom's Expectancy Theory: The Relationship Between Effort, Performance, and Reward

Related Questions: Questions 5, 6, and 13

- These questions refer to the role of financial rewards in increasing employees' effort and performance. From the perspective of Vroom's expectancy theory, employees' motivation depends on three components: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence; meaning that people expect that their effort will lead to successful performance and receiving rewards. Positive answers to these questions indicate employees' belief in a direct relationship between effort, performance, and receiving rewards.

Adams' Equity Theory: Fairness in Rewards

Related Questions: Questions 10, 11, and 12

- Explanation: These questions address how to assess fairness in the distribution of rewards and appreciation of employees' efforts. According to Adams' equity theory, employees tend to have a fair ratio between effort (inputs) and rewards (outputs) compared to others. The answers to these questions can show how employees view fairness and transparency in the reward system, and if they do not feel fairness, their motivation and job satisfaction decrease.

Skinner's Reinforcement Theory: Positive and Negative Reinforcement

Related Questions: Questions 4, 7, 8, and 9

- These questions address the impact of manager appreciation, working conditions, and feelings of worthiness in increasing employee motivation. From the perspective of Skinner's reinforcement theory, positive reinforcements (such as appreciation) can reinforce desired behaviors and increase motivation. Positive answers to these questions indicate that the work environment and managers' behavior play an important role in reinforcing motivation and improving employee performance.

Note: Some questions, such as 14 and 15, may cover aspects of several theories, but for simplicity in categorization, we have placed them in one main group.

This categorization structure helps to identify the relationship between different motivational theories and real experiences in work environments by accurately evaluating the answers provided by employees, and based on this, to provide practical recommendations for improving reward systems.

3.2.1 Benefits of This Method

Using a questionnaire-based method in this research offers significant advantages that can enhance the quality and credibility of the research results. One of the primary benefits of this method is the ability to collect real-world data from the target group, namely low-income employees. This approach allows us to directly gather the opinions, experiences, and attitudes of this group regarding reward systems and their impact on motivation and performance (Charles D. Johnson, 1984). Additionally, the questionnaire method enables a detailed and quantitative analysis of data, allowing us to examine the impact of rewards on employee motivation using statistical tools (Alexey A. Asryan, 2024). The information collected through this method can also contribute to providing practical and applicable suggestions to organizations for designing effective reward systems (Camp et al., 1998). Ultimately, this field research method allows the researcher to match theoretical findings and research hypotheses with real-world data and present reliable and valid results that are not only scientifically credible but also practically implementable and effective (Ockenfels, 2008).

3.3 Field survey and questionnaire analysis

After explaining the field research method, the type of questions, the statistical population, and the purpose of the questions, it is time to analyze and examine the answers received from our target employees.

The gender and age composition of the participants was as follows:

- 41% female
- 59% male
- 10% between 25 and 35 years old
- 56% between 35 and 40 years old
- 13% between 45 and 55 years old
- 5% between 55 and 65 years old

3.4 Results of the Survey

In order to provide a clear and comprehensive picture of the perspectives of the research group, which is of particular importance in this study, the results of the survey will be presented accurately and broken down by question in the following section. In this presentation, in addition to mentioning the results, the percentage of responses provided to each question will also be mentioned so that the esteemed readers can gain a deeper understanding of the dispersion and distribution of opinions of the research group. The purpose of this section is to provide a platform for more accurate analysis and more effective conclusion from the collected data.

Question 1: I naturally enjoy performing my job duties.

- Strongly disagree : 3%
- Disagree : 10%
- Agree : 69%
- Strongly agree : 15%
- No opinion : 3%

Question 2: My interests are the main factors driving me to strive for the best performance at work.

- Strongly disagree : 8%

- Disagree : 8%
- Agree : 49%
- Strongly agree : 31%
- No opinion : 5%

Question 3: Doing things for satisfaction and personal interest is very important to me.

- Strongly disagree : 3%
- Disagree : 8%
- Agree : 54%
- Strongly agree : 31%
- No opinion : 5%

Question 4: Appreciation from managers increases my desire to improve performance.

- Strongly disagree : 3%
- Disagree : 3%
- Agree : 29%
- Strongly agree : 63%
- No opinion : 3%

Question 5: Receiving financial rewards from the organization plays an important role in increasing my productivity.

- Strongly disagree : 0%
- Disagree : 0%
- Agree : 34%
- Strongly agree : 66%
- No opinion : 0%

Question 6: The organization's financial rewards motivate me to pursue my career goals with more effort.

- Strongly disagree : 0%
- Disagree : 0%
- Agree : 42%
- Strongly agree : 58%

- No opinion : 0%

Question 7: I am completely satisfied with my current working conditions.

- Strongly disagree : 15%
- Disagree : 33%
- Agree : 44%
- Strongly agree : 5%
- No opinion : 3%

Question 8: My work environment increases my motivation to deliver the best performance.

- Strongly disagree : 8%
- Disagree : 21%
- Agree : 38%
- Strongly agree : 28%
- No opinion : 5%

Question 9: I feel that I am recognized as a valuable person in the organization.

- Strongly disagree : 3%
- Disagree : 21%
- Agree : 49%
- Strongly agree : 21%
- No opinion : 8%

Question 10: I feel that my efforts and performance are fairly appreciated in the organization.

- Strongly disagree : 21%
- Disagree : 38%
- Agree : 28%
- Strongly agree : 3%
- No opinion : 10%

Question 11: The way incentives and appreciation are distributed in the organization is transparent and fair..

- Strongly disagree : 26%
- Disagree : 41%
- Agree : 23%
- Strongly agree : 3%
- No opinion : 8%

Question 12: I believe that the organization responds fairly to my efforts.

- Strongly disagree : 18%
- Disagree : 38%
- Agree : 33%
- Strongly agree : 3%
- No opinion : 8%

Question 13: I believe that having a regular incentive system helps to increase my efforts and improve my work performance.

- Strongly disagree : 0%
- Disagree : 3%
- Agree : 38%
- Strongly agree : 56%
- No opinion : 3%

3.4.1 Analysis and Conclusion of the Field Research Section Based on Questionnaire Data:

Based on the data collected from the questionnaire (with a scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree), the average response coefficient in most questions is between 2.7 and 3.2, which indicates a general tendency of participants to "somewhat agree" with the statements made. These data will be analyzed using four main motivational theories to examine the long-term impact of rewards on employee motivation and provide practical solutions for improving reward systems. In the following, the results of data analysis are presented and interpreted based on each theory separately to reach a comprehensive conclusion.

3.4.1.1 Relationship to Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Questions related to intrinsic motivation (such as "I naturally enjoy doing my job duties" or "Doing things is important to me because of personal satisfaction and interest") have an average close to 3. This indicates that low-income employees have some degree of intrinsic motivation, but this motivation is not very strong. From the perspective of SDT, individuals experience higher intrinsic motivation when three basic psychological needs, namely autonomy, competence, and relatedness, are well met (Deci & Ryan, 2008a). In this research, although an average above 2.7 indicates that some people are somewhat interested in their work, the failure to reach an average of 4 or higher suggests that some of these needs are probably not fully met in the workplace.

On the other hand, questions related to extrinsic motivation (such as the impact of external rewards or managers' appreciation on performance) also show averages close to 3. This indicates that low-income employees also pay attention to external rewards to meet their financial needs and gain appreciation, but this attention is moderate. Based on SDT, if external rewards are perceived as controlling or ignore employees' psychological needs, intrinsic motivation may be weakened in the long run (Deci & Ryan, 2008a).

3.4.1.2 Relationship to Vroom's Expectancy Theory

In this theory, three components, Expectancy, Instrumentality, and Valence, determine the extent to which individuals increase their efforts in hopes of receiving rewards. Data shows that questions related to the belief in "the impact of rewards on performance" or "the role of external rewards in increasing productivity" have averages around 2.9 to 3.1. These figures indicate that low-income employees somewhat believe that if they perform better, they will receive more rewards, and this is important to them.

However, the relatively lower average in questions related to job satisfaction or feelings of fairness may indicate that some employees do not sufficiently trust the reward system and the effort-reward relationship. If instrumentality is weakened in their view (i.e., they do not see a clear link between good performance and receiving rewards), their long-term motivation decreases (Suciu et al., n.d.-b).

3.4.1.3 Relationship to Adams' Equity Theory

Based on the results, questions related to the perception of fairness (such as "The way rewards are distributed is transparent and fair" or "The organization fairly responds to my

efforts") have an average of about 2.7 to 2.8, which is slightly lower than other sections. These numbers indicate that low-income employees are not very sure that the reward or appreciation system in their organization is fair. According to Adams' equity theory, if a person feels that their inputs (effort, time, skill) are not proportional to their outputs (reward, appreciation, reward) compared to others, they experience feelings of inequality and reduced motivation (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012a). Therefore, the presence of a low average in this section indicates that some employees probably feel that they do not receive enough appreciation or reward for their efforts. This feeling of inequality can negatively affect their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and ultimately their performance.

3.4.1.4 Relationship to Skinner's Reinforcement Theory

The results of questions related to the impact of rewards on performance (average close to 3) indicate that low-income employees acknowledge that positive rewards (such as appreciation or a regular reward system) can improve their performance, but this impact is not at the level of "strongly agree." From the perspective of reinforcement theory, positive reinforcement can increase desired behavior (Omomia & Omomia, 2014). At the same time, if rewards are not sufficient or are accompanied by fear of losing rewards (negative reinforcement), intrinsic motivation and feelings of autonomy may decrease and lead to job burnout in the long run.

The lower average in questions related to satisfaction and fairness also indicates that although employees benefit somewhat from positive reinforcement, the reward system is probably not transparent and stable enough to maintain their intrinsic motivation and trust at a high level.

3.4.2 Summary and Conclusion of the Field Research Section

The field data obtained from the questionnaire shows that low-income employees have some degree of intrinsic motivation, but the role of extrinsic motivation is still important to them. This is consistent with self-determination theory, which states that intrinsic motivation is formed when psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) are met; while external rewards may have less long-term impact if these needs are not met (Deci & Ryan, 2008a).

On the other hand, based on Vroom's expectancy theory, employees somewhat believe that better performance leads to rewards or appreciation, but incomplete satisfaction with job conditions and feelings of inequality can weaken instrumentality (the relationship between effort and reward) (Suciu et al., n.d.-b). Also, according to Adams' equity theory, the low average in questions related to the perception of fairness indicates that some employees feel that their outputs (reward and appreciation) are not commensurate with their inputs, which reduces motivation (Al-zawahreh & Nayef Al-Madi, 2012a).

Finally, Skinner's reinforcement theory also shows that positive reinforcement can have a positive effect on performance, but if there is a lack of transparency or excessive dependence on financial rewards, employees' intrinsic motivation and feelings of job satisfaction will decrease in the long term (Gordan & Amutan Krishanan, n.d.). The results of the questionnaire indicate that low-income employees accept the role of external rewards to some extent, but uncertainty about fairness and transparency in the reward system prevents the formation of sustainable motivation.

Therefore, based on the results obtained from the field survey and the explanations and relationships of the answers to the proposed theories, the following four solutions are suggested:

- Increase Transparency in the Reward Distribution Process: Creating a mechanism that shows how better performance leads to rewards can build employee trust and strengthen their motivation.
- Combine Financial Rewards with Career Growth Opportunities: Based on SDT and questionnaire findings, simply paying financial rewards is not enough, and attention should also be paid to the needs of autonomy and competence.
- Improve the Sense of Fairness in the Organization: Based on Adams' equity theory, a feeling of inequality is one of the main reasons for reduced motivation; therefore, fair assessment of efforts and public announcement of the reasons for rewarding can be effective.
- Strengthen Intrinsic Motivation Through Spiritual Appreciation: According to the results, employees respond positively to some extent to the appreciation and encouragement of managers. Spiritual appreciation and recognition of employees' achievements can complement financial rewards and have a greater long-term impact.

Considering the field findings and analysis based on the four main theories, it can be concluded that designing a sustainable and effective reward system for low-income employees requires considering a combination of financial, psychological, and fair structure factors to strengthen their short-term and long-term motivation simultaneously. According to field research, financial rewards alone cannot increase their motivation in the long term.

4 Conclusion

In this research, using a theoretical and field approach, It was attempted to examine the various dimensions of the impact of rewards on the motivation of low-income employees. From the theoretical section, through a detailed analysis of the four main theories – Self-Determination, Vroom's Expectancy, Adams' Equity, and Skinner's Reinforcement – a set of key recommendations was obtained. In general, each of these theories provided three recommendations, which together lead to 12 recommendations, including items such as: creating transparency in the reward distribution process, ensuring a direct fit between effort, work experience and receiving rewards, emphasizing fairness and equality in performance evaluation, using a combination of financial and non-financial rewards, providing opportunities for professional growth and development, increasing employee participation in organizational decision-making, recognizing achievements and strengthening public appreciation, and improving reinforcement systems in a way that avoids negative reinforcement (Barber & Warn, 2005) (Suciu et al., n.d.-b)(Gordan & Amutan Krishanan, n.d.).

Also, in the field research section, through standardized localized questionnaires, a detailed analysis of motivational dimensions such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, perceived fairness in the distribution of incentives, and the impact of incentives on performance was conducted. In this section, four key recommendations were extracted, which include: increasing transparency in the performance evaluation and reward distribution process, optimal combination of financial rewards with non-financial incentives, reducing dependence on negative reinforcements by eliminating the fear of losing rewards, and supporting employees' psychological needs to strengthen intrinsic motivation (Anfara, 2013b) (Cheema, 2014).

4.1 The Long-Term Impact of Rewards on Low-Income Employees

By combining the results of the theoretical and field sections, it can be concluded that simply using financial rewards for low-income employees is not sufficient in the long term. Although these rewards play an important role in increasing motivation and productivity in the short term by addressing basic needs and providing economic security (Landry, 2020b), in the long term, due to creating dependence on controlled motivation and reducing the sense of autonomy, it can lead to a decrease in intrinsic motivation, job burnout, and increased dissatisfaction (Kisseloff, 2011b).

Therefore, to create a sustainable and effective reward system that can maintain the motivation of low-income employees in the long term, systems should be designed that, in addition to meeting financial needs, consider other factors. For example, providing opportunities for professional growth and learning, creating participation in organizational decision-making, and recognizing and appreciating efforts as key elements of strengthening intrinsic motivation can play an important role in creating a balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Also, transparency in performance evaluation and reward distribution processes, along with emphasis on fairness in these systems, are other key factors in improving the level of satisfaction and organizational commitment (Rachmawati, 2024b).

4.2 Designing a Reward System to Increase Motivation in the Long Term

Finally, based on the findings obtained from the analysis of field data and the theoretical foundations used, it is recommended that organizations use a comprehensive approach in designing the reward system. This system should include several key sections:

- ❖ Creating full transparency in the evaluation and reward distribution processes;
- ❖ Appropriate combination of financial rewards with non-financial incentives to strengthen intrinsic motivation;
- ❖ Ensuring fairness in the distribution of rewards through periodic review of evaluation criteria
- ❖ Providing opportunities for development and professional growth to employees;

Such a system, in addition to increasing productivity and job satisfaction, can create a positive organizational culture, increase commitment and reduce turnover, which ultimately will lead to improved overall organizational performance.

So, It can be concluded that for low-income employees, the use of financial rewards alone cannot increase motivation in the long term. Rather, it is necessary to design a comprehensive reward system that, in addition to meeting financial needs, also meets psychological needs such as autonomy, competence, and social connections. For this reason, providing practical solutions to improve transparency, fairness, combining financial and non-financial rewards, and supporting employees' professional growth are among the requirements of an effective long-term reward system. These findings and recommendations can be a guide for managers and decision-makers in designing motivational strategies that not only help meet the economic needs of employees, but also pave the way for sustainable growth and development of the organization

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