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The Effect of Reward Management on Organisational Performance in  
Selected Sales Departments in Ireland

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# Abstract

According to research in the topic area, Reward management plays a crucial role in improving organisational performance(Omolawal & Bawalla,2017). While there is an agreement that reward systems improve performance, there have also been inconsistencies present within the topic area that suggest this may not be the case(Qin et al.,2020). However, there is limited research regarding reward systems exploring the adverse side effects of performance that can be fostered due to reward systems in place.

The research aims to explore the side effects of reward systems and identify their impact on organisational performance. The research explores these adverse side effects of reward systems through quantitative and qualitative methods with the aid of a strict sample population, which includes salespeople who have worked within Irish sales departments to ensure the results are as relevant as possible. The research is significant regarding the topic as the results are expected to provide critical insights for management concerning the effect the reward system may have on employees and the organisation.

The research also aims to provide practical recommendations for future management regarding how to eradicate any unwanted side effects of reward systems to maximise the effectiveness of the reward system within the workplace.

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# Introduction

## Reward Management

The creation of reward management can be traced back to the scientific management era; during this era, reward management played a key role as reward systems contributed to the success and implementation of the scientific management philosophy (Walters et al., 2019). Tasks and bonuses were the most crucial elements in the scientific management era as there was a need for management to develop plans which offered high wages to employees at low labour costs (Walters et al., 2019). Frank and Lillian Gilberth (Walters et al., 2019) developed a reward system that set the foundation for reward systems still used today to satisfy the management needs of the scientific management era. The basis of the reward systems developed identified two forms of direct incentives: ambition and pride of work, and indirect, which include rewards and punishment (Walters et al., 2019). These forms of incentives set the foundation for reward systems used in business today and satisfy the exact needs using similar approaches to the tangible and intangible forms (Doesnovic, 2016) we see today.

Human resource management refers to the policies, practices, and systems that affect staff behaviour, attitudes, and work performance within the organisation (Doesnovic, 2016). One of the key activities associated with human resource management, which is utilised to alter employee behaviour, is rewarding (Doesnovic, 2016); this concerns the management of money, goods, and services that employees receive from their employer in exchange for work performed. Employee rewarding is a human resource management activity seen as a necessary component for creating a stable business, successful performance, and achieving organisational goals (Doesnovic, 2016), thus demonstrating the importance of reward management in today's business environment.

According to (Armstrong, 2012) reward management refers to the strategies, policies, and processes required for ensuring the value of human resources contribute towards achieving organisational goals by recognising and rewarding these efforts. The purpose of reward management in the corporate context is to support the achievement of business goals by developing a performance culture within the organisation (Armstrong, 2012). Reward



management aims to reward employees according to the value they create, motivate employees, and define what is essential in terms of behaviour and outcomes for employees within the organisation (Armstrong,2012). Various forms of rewards exist within reward management as rewards represent the total earnings or charges that employees receive from their employer in exchange for their work(Dosenovic,2016). Organisations tailor their offered rewards to achieve the best organisational goals, including tangible rewards(material) and intangible rewards(non-material).

Material or financial rewards form the basis of reward systems; these include basic pay such as salary, pay increases such as annual salary increases, and incentives based on performance. Material or financial rewards aim to motivate employees to achieve results beyond expectations. Incentives include raises which are an increase on the employee's salary, bonuses which are one-off lump payments paid to employees for achieving specific job performance requirements and commission, which pays employees a percentage of revenue generated, such as 5% of every sale the employee receives(Doesnovic,2016). Non-material rewards, in contrast, are non-financial rewards such as employee benefits; for example, these could include gym memberships or healthcare. Non-material rewards can also include non-tangible rewards such as flexible working hours and time off work for overperforming employees(Doesnovic,2016).

The research looks at recognising the effects of reward management on employees and overall organisational performance. For this, it is crucial to identify the key factors which are pivotal in improving organisational performance. The modern organisational theory hypothesises that happy staff is key to corporate success and that motivated, committed and satisfied staff members perform better, thus ultimately leading to improvements in organisational performance(Cheema & Asra-ul-Haq,2017). Given this information, employee creativity, motivation, job satisfaction, and knowledge sharing were assessed concerning reward management. These factors were assessed to identify the effect of reward systems on these factors responsible for determining employee and organisational performance.

# Literature Review

Reward systems vary from organisation to organisation in terms of their offered rewards and application of rewards. Some managers view rewards systems as financial incentives, while others view rewards as monetary compensation(Ohene-Danso,2015). Reward systems are crucial to organisations; as stated by (Patchen,2003), many potential employees would not be responsible for carrying out organisational duties without some form of reward. There are many forms of rewards; thus, organisations develop their reward systems to attract the desired employee that aligns with their organisational goals while also creating a reward system to motivate employees to achieve these goals correctly. The chosen rewards offered by an organisation and how they are distributed may influence employees' job satisfaction and ultimately affect organisational performance(Ohene-Danso,2015).

Rewards offered by organisations can be either intrinsic or extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards, for example, relate to non-financial rewards; these can include the feeling of personal achievement, growth, or development this can be achieved by completing challenging tasks, gaining responsibility, status or influence; other forms include receiving verbal recognition or even symbolic rewards(Zagoria,2005). Rewards offered to employees can also be extrinsic; these forms of rewards include financial rewards such as salaries, commission, bonuses, fringe benefits, and stock options(Zagoria,2005).

The choice of rewards utilised within the organisations' reward system is crucial to organisational performance. The nature of rewards offered serves as an attraction to potential employees while also improving loyalty, motivation, and satisfaction among employees(Black & Lynch, 1996). Therefore, organisations must design rewards systems that align with their specific goals and encourage behaviour that improves organisational performance.

## Organisational Performance

Organisational performance refers to the goals and achievements of the organisation (Rezaei et al.,2017); it is difficult for organisations to provide adequate services for consumers in which

outcomes are not measured; thus, reward systems play a crucial role in the measurement of organisational performance. Corporate performance measurement consists of measuring both subjective and objective factors (Agarwal et al., 2003). Subjective factors relate to performance measures based on employee and customer perceptions, such as customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction. In contrast, objective factors include elements that are not influenced by opinion, such as the number of sales recorded.

Reward systems play a crucial role in realising organisational goals and objectives to improve organisational performance (Omolawal & Bawalla, 2017); thus, it is pivotal that the organisation's reward systems structure encourages factors that influence organisational performance. Factors identified as crucial in influencing organisational performance include knowledge sharing, job satisfaction, motivation, and creativity. Thus the focus of reward management must be to enhance these factors within the organisation.

## Knowledge Sharing

According to Nonaka (1991), knowledge is a reliable source of competitive advantage within the economy; thus, knowledge sharing plays a key role in organisational performance. Knowledge determines the quality of every decision we make. Knowledge ownership is not enough for lasting competitive advantage, but the ability to disseminate knowledge by promoting knowledge exchange is essential (Luzar & Zoran, 2020). Knowledge sharing as an asset allows performance to be leveraged for good management practices and is vital for organisations to remain in the market and stay competitive (Da Silva & Borsato, 2017). Therefore, organisations face the challenge of efficiently guaranteeing knowledge sharing through management systems that encourage these actions, thus extending to the development of the reward structure as encouraging knowledge sharing is crucial for organisational performance. The reward systems effect on knowledge sharing suggests that reward systems positively affect knowledge sharing within the organisation. (Yao et al., 2007) suggests that company-wide recognition and performance rewards increase cross-cultural knowledge sharing. (Kankanhalli et al., 2005) also

supports reward systems for knowledge sharing as stated rewards that rely on the performance, namely increased salary, bonus, and promotion, have positive influences on knowledge contribution within the organisation.

However, although the initial literature review suggests reward systems play a positive role in knowledge sharing, these findings have significant inconsistencies. (Salameh & Zamil,2020)stated although the incentives related to knowledge sharing provide positive contributions, a conclusion could not be drawn from it's effects; thus, it is unknown if reward systems directly affected knowledge sharing within the organisation. These findings were further supported as (Salameh & Zamil,2020) stated that the role of reward systems concerning knowledge sharing is not consistent, and giving more money to reward systems does not necessarily encourage more knowledge sharing. These findings suggest inconsistencies in the current literature, proving the need for further research within the topic area. The importance of knowledge sharing for organisational performance is evident. Thus, it is crucial to identify the effect caused on levels of knowledge sharing within the organisation by rewards systems to determine whether incentives for employees are hindering the ability to appropriately knowledge share to achieve organisational goals rather than personal goals exclusively.

## Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction reflects the feeling employees have towards their work, and if employees are satisfied, it usually entails a pleasant emotional state at their job. Job satisfaction refers to an employee's positive attitude to their work(Macdonald & MacIntyre,1977). Job satisfaction is one of the most studied constructs within marketing/sales literature as it is key to understanding salesforce relationships. Job satisfaction is crucial as, without satisfied employees, firms see high rates of turnover and a decrease in organisational commitment, which can affect organisational performance(Rutherford et al.,2019). Ostroff (1992) suggested organisations with satisfied employees tend to be more effective than organisations with dissatisfied employees, and this theory is supported by the research conducted by (Bakotic,2016), which studied the effect of employees' job satisfaction levels on organisational performance. These results suggest that job satisfaction strongly determines organisational performance, and therefore higher levels of job

satisfaction within the organisation lead to improved organisational performance. The significance of this study for reward management is that it suggests that reward management structures should be developed with a focus on increasing job satisfaction levels hence improving organisational performance.

In terms of reward management and how it can increase or decrease job satisfaction levels within the organisation, the literature review implies that rewards play an influential role in enhancing employees overall job satisfaction levels. Sarwar & Abugre (2013) stated that 95.19% of respondents within a study conducted agreed rewards are a motivator of job satisfaction and that job satisfaction increases with higher rewards. Furthermore, a study conducted by (Sheikh,2019) also supported this finding as stated the results of this study found rewards also had a significant positive impact on job satisfaction. A study conducted by Martano et al. (2018) also indicated rewards increased job satisfaction; however, the findings showed that job satisfaction did not correlate with job performance. In this case, rewards did not improve job performance, thus providing gaps in the research area as to why job satisfaction is not achieving the desired results. The inconsistencies found within the literature review suggest the need for further research to identify the reasoning behind the lack of improvement in job and organisational performance to identify whether there are any underlying factors hindering performance.

## Motivation

Motivation is the primary driver of one's behaviour to complete a job; it is a powerful tool that reinforces the behaviour and triggers the tendency to continue working. Motivation is an internal driver that aims to satisfy an unsatisfied need and achieve specific goals (Dobre,2013); therefore, it is evident that motivation plays a crucial role in job performance as it is pivotal in completing job tasks. Employee motivation has also been shown to influence organisational performance to a significant degree(Dobre,2013). Kamalian et al. (2010) state when employees align their goals with organisational goals, organisational performance is improved; hence motivated staff is essential for organisations that wish to increase productivity and customer satisfaction(Dobre,2013). Therefore, the organisation's reward management efforts must effectively motivate staff as it is crucial in improving organisational performance.

When conducting the literature review of rewards management's role in employee motivation and how it affects job performance, the research showed that reward management systems effectively improved motivation. In contrast, it was stated that employee motivation was not directly linked to job performance. Martano et al.(2018) suggested reward management did not affect job performance, while Yoon et al.(2015) stated rewards harmed employees' motivation, indicating that there were further inconsistencies within this topic area. The research topic requires further research to explore the relationship between reward systems and motivation to evaluate whether incompetence in the reward management strategy is responsible for the negative effect on the individual's job performance and organisational performance.

## Creativity

Creativity is defined as the "novel and useful products, ideas, or procedures that provide an organisation with important raw material for subsequent development and possible implementation"(Oldham & Cummings,1996). In today's business environment, managers are aware that employees are the organisation's most important asset. Employees creativity is crucial for maintaining competitive advantage as it can lead to new innovative products or services and the entrance to new markets, which directly relates to overall organisational performance (Katarzyna & Olha,2014), therefore developing a creative environment through reward management is crucial for organisations. Innovation and creativity play an essential role in organisational performance as innovation and creativity is a source of competitive advantage for organisations (Davila et al.,2019). It was concluded in a study conducted by (Davila et al.,2019) that there is an increased effect on sales growth within the organisation when innovation and creativity are supported or encouraged hence the importance innovation, and creativity plays in improving organisational performance. The study's findings highlight the importance innovation and creativity play in organisational performance; therefore, the organisation's reward management approach structure must be developed to align with these findings, emphasising the need to encourage creativity in the workplace.

The literature review suggests that reward management can foster innovative behaviour amongst employees. Creative work environments act as mediators in the relationship between high-performance work systems and organisational performance (Heffernan et al.,2016). However, the

further literature review suggests inconsistencies within this research. (Yoon et al.,2015) stated that the effects of reward management through the rewards of tangible and intangible rewards for employees negatively impacted employee creativity, although noted the research had its limitations and warranted further research in the area. The literature review presents inconsistencies in the research as it is stated that reward management is crucial for innovation and creativity in the organisation while also suggesting it can hinder creativity. Further research was recommended to identify why reward systems may in some environments impede the creativity of employees and damage organisational performance by identifying factors responsible for undesired results.

## The Reward System Perspective

Employee behaviour plays a crucial role in reward management and how rewards translate into results. (Antoni et al.,2017) states, rewards create high competitiveness amongst employees, thus leading to deviant behaviour, such as sabotage, which harms organisational performance. These findings suggest reasoning for the inconsistencies found in the literature review regarding knowledge sharing, job satisfaction, motivation, and creativity and possibly explain why reward management did not improve overall organisational performance in these specific cases. To better understand the effects of rewards systems in developing damaging behaviours for organisational performance, further research into the rewards systems perspective was conducted to highlight any recurring themes in the literature review, suggesting why inconsistencies are so prevalent within the literature review.

The reward system perspective offers insights into why employees and organisations may hinder performance satisfying the reward system structure. The reward system perspective suggests that organisational actors(employees etc.) seek information concerning what activities are rewarded and then seek to do or pretend to do in some cases what the rewards system structure rewards(Jansen & Van Glinow,1985). The suggestion that organisational actors place higher importance on achieving personal targets to receive rewards outlines why organisations may be hindered by implementing an inadequate rewards structure that does not align with organisational goals.

Behaviours that are unethical or deviant, as mentioned, are a function of the individual's environment (Magnusson & Endler, 1977). In an organisational setting, individuals are not the focal point concerning unethical or deviant behaviour but rather the rewards or sanctions implemented within the organisation that shape the individual's behaviour. The reward system perspective views the reward system as direct determinants of group norms and behaviours within the organisational setting. Reward systems comprise related processes through which employee behaviours are directed at motivating individuals or collaborative groups to achieve organisational goals or objectives. Kerr (1975) argued that reward systems could have the opposite effect on the individual or group and are commonly responsible for developing behaviours that they attempt to discourage. An example of how reward systems may hinder the organisation is the paradox of honesty and secrecy within the workplace; for example, the individual may be required to withhold information regarding a client to achieve personal sales targets. The significance of this action is that the reward system structure develops a trend or pattern (Jansen & Glinow, 1985) where honesty is punished, and dishonesty is rewarded in the form of rewards for achieving targets. These trends can become harmful for organisational performance as they can lead to information being withheld from relevant stakeholders, developing a toxic corporate culture, or even resulting in scandals affecting the organisation's reputation and revenues.

An example of how an incompetent reward management strategy resulted in a nationwide scandal damaging organisational reputation and inflicting fines is the Wells Fargo scandal (Levine, 2018) of 2016. The reward system in place at Wells Fargo put retail bankers under pressure to open new accounts. As a result of the reward system, the employees began to open fake accounts to achieve personal targets and obtain rewards. The Wells Fargo scandal resulted in the opening of fake accounts, which ran up \$2.4 million in fees and generated zero revenue resulting in fines for the organisation (Levine, 2018). The Wells Fargo scandal is a crucial example of how reward mismanagement can damage organisational performance, highlighting the importance of a well thought out reward systems structure and the need for research to be conducted on the research topic to identify key trends and patterns within the Irish sales industry.



Furthermore, modern literature has been presented that also explores the undermining effects caused by the implementation of rewards within the organisation. While previous literature has identified that reward systems can often result in undesired results, contemporary research on the topic area has supported these findings suggesting reward systems cause undermining effects. A recent study conducted by Qin et al. (2020) researched the impact of monetary rewards on performance; this research identified side effects caused by offering a reward for performance as the study showed rewards for reward relevant tasks impaired the performance of reward irrelevant tasks(Qin et al.,2020). It was shown that when rewards were not offered for tasks that once included rewards, relevant motivation engagement levels declined to a lower level than reward irrelevant tasks. These findings mean that if organisations offer rewards, it must be acknowledged that rewards must be consistent, or employees will become demotivated.

It was also found that offering performance-dependent rewards harmed the performance of reward irrelevant tasks, and in addition to this, the damaging effect on reward irrelevant tasks lasted longer than the positive effects created by reward relevant tasks(Qin et al.,2020). The findings also showed that monetary rewards might not increase motivation and attention to all tasks and suggest that financial rewards hinder employees' voluntary involvement concerning reward irrelevant tasks(Qin et al.,2020). These results identified the undermining effect that rewards could cause, thus providing a solution to the gaps or inconsistencies found in the literature concerning reward systems effect on organisational performance. These findings suggest undermining effects may be accountable, which also offers reasoning as to why the research conducted by Yoon et al.(2015) found that rewards were not successful in increasing employee motivation.

## The Undermining Effect

The undermining effect of rewards explored by Qin et al.(2020) is not a new phenomenon, as many previous studies have examined and identified the undermining effect of rewards. The undermining effect of rewards suggests that rewards in specific organisational activities can result in undesired behavioural effects on employees. The undermining effect has been identified as consistent in studies conducted by (Rummel & Feinberg 1988; Wiersma 1992; Tang & Hall 1995; Deci et al. 1999). These studies all explored the effects of rewards on motivation, one of

the critical factors for influencing organisational performance as stated by Dobre (2013). The results were consistent in identifying an undermining effect.

The research conducted by Deci et al.(1999) showed that tangible rewards within the reward system had a substantial adverse effect on intrinsic motivation among employees. It was also concluded that managerial strategies that focus on offering extrinsic rewards run the risk of diminishing rather than promoting intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, the study showed that extrinsic rewards also undermined free-choice behaviour among employees, which may also hinder innovation or creativity, which is also a key determinant of organisational performance. The study showed that verbal rewards had a significant positive effect on employees' intrinsic motivation, suggesting an alternative approach to reward management approaches. Supporting the findings of Deci et al.(1999), a study conducted by Rummel & Feinberg (1988) also identified an undermining effect. The study conducted on 88 participants exploring the impact of extrinsic rewards found that 83 of the 88 participants experienced an undermining effect on intrinsic motivation. Similarly to these results, a study conducted by Wiersman(1992) also found intrinsic rewards undermined intrinsic motivation as all 16 studies reviewed within the research concluded adverse effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. In support of the consistent findings among researchers in the topic area Tang & Hall(1995) reviewed 50 published studies that explored the undermining effect showed that tasks contingent rewards decreased intrinsic motivation similarly to the mentioned studies.

The significance of these findings is prevalent in the suggestion that motivation is a critical factor for influencing organisational performance; thus, the undermining effect may be responsible for the inconsistencies in the literature concerning rewards effect on organisational performance. Reward management creates a basis for attaining and encouraging employees to achieve organisational goals, hence why the undermining effect plays an essential role in the reward management perspective. Management must acknowledge this effect as the consequences may ultimately hinder organisational performance. The research aims to identify these factors that may impair organisational performance and recommend most effective reward systems structures for future management approaches.



# Research Question

The research question of this study focuses on the effects of reward management and specific reward systems on the performance of the individual employee within sales departments in Ireland and how this translates to the organisation's performance. The research question for this study is as follows: "What is the effect of reward management on organisational performance in selected sales departments in Ireland". The research question aims to identify any employee or collective behaviours influenced by reward systems that may positively or negatively impact organisational performance and identify the reasoning for these actions.

# Methodology

The selected form of methodology for this study consists of conducting primary research. The primary research methods are used to identify factors that influence performance regarding reward management while also developing thematic findings regarding the topic area. The primary research aims to identify reasoning to undesirable behaviours within the salesforce and suggest actions that organisations may take to eradicate or prevent damaging organisational behaviours. The research methods that were undertaken for this research consist of a mix of quantitative and qualitative research to develop valuable insights regarding the research area and develop a statistical analysis of the research problem.

# Methods Used

The quantitative research conducted for the research consisted of an online survey. Online surveys consist of a survey that may be administered by email, website, advertisement, or the sharing of the relevant URL link(Fahy & Jobber,2012). As a research tool, online surveys benefit the researcher, such as being a low-cost research tool and allowing control over who completes the survey, which was relevant to the research as the research was not funded while also requiring a specific sample to be surveyed.

The qualitative research conducted for the research consisted of a focus group. Focus groups involve semi-structured discussions between the researcher/moderator and the group of

participants. Focus groups involve a list of topic areas that are to be discussed. Focus groups allow the group considerable freedom as to how much detail they provide in their insights and eliminate time pressure when contributing, which can lead to richer and deeper insights (Fahy & Jobber, 2012). The decision to undertake a focus group as part of the research also benefited the research, such as an affordable research method and allowing for specific samples to contribute to the research, which was essential for the research.

The research problem identified within the literature review showed reward systems did not always have the desired effect on performance. The rationale for employing a mix of online surveys and focus groups within the research is to provide a statistical image of what causes the undesired effects and then develop an insightful image. The online surveys in the research aim to identify the factors responsible for the undesired effects, such as the undermining effect stated by Qin et al. (2020) in the literature review. The research aims to develop a deeper understanding of the research area by identifying recurring themes which emerged from the focus group, thus developing a fuller understanding of the topic area and developing suggestions to eradicate the undesired effects.

The research methods undertaken were influenced by past research in the literature review. Studies conducted by (Kamalian et al. 2010; Sarwar & Abugre 2013; Yoon et al. 2015; Sheikh 2019) previously adopted a survey approach to analysing the effects of relevant factors associated with reward management on performance thus providing a basis to begin the exploratory research conducted by implementing a similar approach. The literature review process also encouraged the use of a qualitative approach. It was clear from reviewing studies that adopted a quantitative approach that there was a need for a research method that could uncover underlying factors in the research area; therefore, a focus group approach was also utilised.

## Procedure Adopted

The research was conducted using the following steps.

Data for this research was collected using quantitative and qualitative research methods such as online surveys and a focus group. Firstly, the online survey was developed by creating 17 questions to extract insights regarding rewards systems and their effect on performance within selected sales departments. The online survey collected data from 140 salespeople and consisted of multiple-choice questions. To ensure the surveys were only completed by the target audience, i.e., Salespeople or former salespeople, purposive sampling was used, followed by snowball sampling. The sampling process consisted of chosen participants recommending participants and sharing the online survey with fellow employees or friends and family who have also worked in sales. Once the online survey was developed, the survey was shared with the relevant participants and collected results.

The qualitative research involved participants receiving an information sheet and consent form in advance. The information sheet participants received included details such as the purpose of the research, the nature of participants' involvement, potential risks and benefits, the confidentiality of the research, how the findings will be recorded and stored, and further contact info regarding the research.

When developing the focus group for the qualitative research, questions were developed to extract more profound insights into the topic area to achieve a greater level of understanding on the topic. The focus group consisted of five questions which were developed to be open-ended to allow for discussion throughout the group as well as allowing the moderator to add to the conversation to extract more information. When conducting the focus group, participants were chosen carefully following the same procedure as the online survey, such as employing a purposive sampling procedure to ensure participants meet the following criteria: salespeople or former salespeople. Five participants were chosen to take part and invited to the focus group. The focus group took place on the 5th of June 2021 and took approximately thirty-five minutes to complete. Before conducting the focus group, participants were greeted and reminded of the rules of the focus group. The focus group was conversational and ran smoothly without any

disruptions. The focus group was recorded on two devices, phone and laptop, to ensure no technician difficulties occurred which could harm the data collection process. Once the focus group was completed, the discussion was transcribed to identify key themes within the findings.

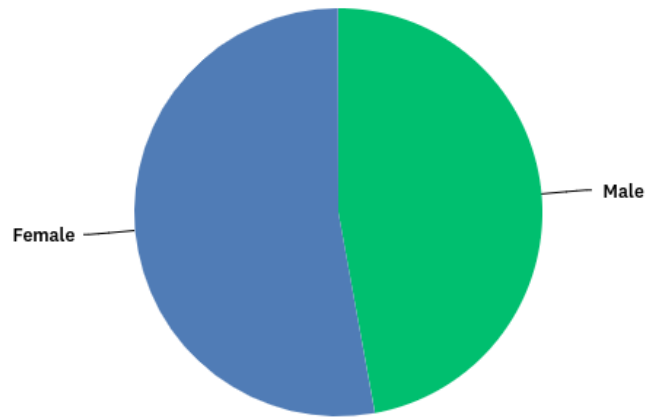
## Sample

When conducting the primary research, the aim of the research question was taken into account in considering the sampling methods. When developing a sampling method for the research, it was identified that a specific audience must be sampled to achieve insights relevant to the research questions. The sampling method was developed to reach a particular target in salespeople or former salespeople. An appropriate sampling method was proposed to achieve this goal. As mentioned, the sample for the online survey consisted of 140 participants who were either salespeople or former salespeople; this requirement to participate was ensured by the purposive and snowball sampling methods. The sampling methods consisted of first reaching out to salespeople and asking them to participate, then asking them to share the online survey with fellow salespeople they may work with or know; this is the snowball sampling method. The sample used for the research consisted of 140 participants, of which seventy-seven were female, and sixty-six were male (Fig.1). The age demographics of the participants in the online survey were as follows eight participants were aged 18 or under, fifty-nine participants were aged between nineteen and twenty-nine years of age, thirty-one participants were aged between thirty and thirty-nine years of age, twenty-five participants were aged between forty and forty-nine years of age, and seventeen participants were aged over 50 years of age(Fig.2).

In terms of the focus group conducted, the sample followed the same selection criteria participants must be salespeople or former salespeople. The sample for the focus group consisted of five male participants, participant A aged twenty-four, participant B aged twenty-two, participant C aged twenty-three, participant D aged twenty-four, and participant E, aged twenty-two. All five participants worked in a sales environment and have experience working under a reward system structure.

# What is your gender

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0



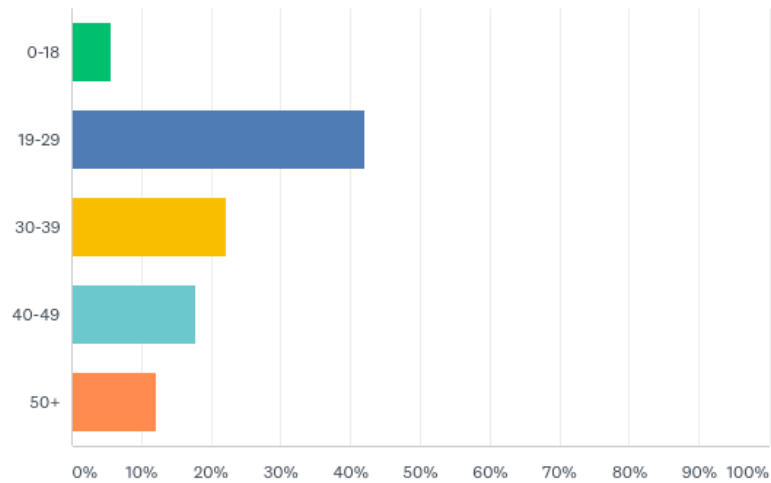
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Male	47.14% 66
Female	52.86% 74
Other (please specify)	Responses 0.00% 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

**(Fig.1) - Gender of Participants**



## What is your age

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
0-18	5.71% 8
19-29	42.14% 59
30-39	22.14% 31
40-49	17.86% 25
50+	12.14% 17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

**(Fig.2) - Age of Participants**

## Research Instrument

The research objective was to identify the factors associated with reward systems that may hinder or aid sales performance in the workplace. When deciding upon a research instrument for the research, the need to identify specific factors and a need for a qualitative understanding of why these factors may influence sales performance was taken into account. As a result of the research objectives, a quantitative approach was taken in the form of an online survey to serve as the basis of the research. The quantitative approach was used to identify the critical factors as surveys enable data to be collected in a standardised way that is consistent for analysis allowing for comparability of data across the research topic (Grover & Vriens, 2006). As an online survey approach was employed to develop a basis for the research, a qualitative approach was also taken

in the form of a focus group to develop a deeper understanding of the topic. Focus groups allow the moderator to observe the participants perceptions, values, beliefs and desires(Grover & Vriens,2006), creating a fuller understanding of the topic area, which aids in the identification of key themes which occur.

A list of the seventeen questions which appeared in the online survey is listed in the appendix. The focus group consisted of five questions as the approach to the qualitative research focused on enabling a conversational tone. According to O'Connor & Madge(2003), too many questions in the discussion make the focus group rigid thus, fewer questions allow for a more conversational tone to the research. The conversationist tone aids the development of rapport between the moderator and participants, which in turn aids the sharing of deeper participant insights. A list of the question sheet used for the focus group is present in the appendix below.

## Data Analysis

Data collection concerning the focus group undertaken consisted of recording the conversation between moderator and participants to analyse the findings. The findings from the focus group were documented by transcribing the entire conversation that was had to allow for analysis of any critical points made by participants. When faced with the challenge of analysing the presented data, a thematic approach was employed to identify critical trends that offered insights regarding the research question. Data was recorded using voice recording on a mobile phone and then uploaded onto the moderator's laptop and stored away within save files to enhance the security of the findings.

## Ethical Considerations

All ethical considerations have been accounted for regarding the research. Participants have been debriefed concerning the nature of the research, and no participants have been swayed or coerced into participating in the research. Minimal risk is assured for participants within the research, and participants have been chosen solely for the research while no vulnerable groups were chosen for the research. An NCI ethical application was submitted before beginning the research process.

## Limitations

The limitations concerning the following research concerns factors such as sample size and time restrictions. The time restrictions concerning the research resulted in challenges in reaching a more extensive sample as the research was facing time constraints. Therefore, relatively small sample size in regards to the target population took part in the research. Another limitation that may have limited the research concerns the number of researchers in regards to this research. The sole researcher conducted the research; thus, factors such as sample size were affected. The scope of the research as one researcher facing time constraints is limited to the amount of research that can be conducted. The research utilised an all-male focus group which could bring limitations such as gender differences. The gender differences were not a concern of the research but could potentially be a limitation.

# Findings

When researching the effect of rewards systems on organisational performance, quantitative findings were supported by qualitative results to identify key themes and factors related to the topic.

## Reward Systems

Reward systems consist of various rewards exchanged with employees in exchange for work(Dosenovic,2016). Several questions were developed to understand why unethical or deviant behaviour is recurring throughout the literature review.

When asked which form of reward system was responsible for unethical or deviant behaviour participants have experienced within the workplace, the findings are present below (Fig.3). The most popular response among the online survey respondents was that they had not experienced any adverse effects due to reward systems. Participants who have experienced adverse effects due to reward systems expressed that commission was the leading cause. Similarly to commission, many participants felt bonuses was the cause for adverse effects. Opportunities for promotion also had a significant number of responses. The findings show that the commission, bonuses and promotion opportunities can have substantial consequences; thus, management should take appropriate action before employing these types of rewards.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Not experienced	41.43%	58
Commission	28.57%	40
Bonus	24.39%	34
Promotion opportunity	18.57%	26
Opportunity for Feedback	12.14%	17
Opportunity for Responsibility	11.43%	16
Opportunity for Authority	11.43%	16
Other	5.71%	8

(Fig.3)

When participants were questioned whether they felt commission influences unethical or deviant behaviour, they answered as presented below(Fig.4). The online survey findings show that the majority of the participants think that commission can influence unethical or deviant behaviour. While participants agree commission can influence undesired behaviour, a large proportion of the participants are unsure. The unsure respondents may be because a large majority have not experienced any unethical or deviant behaviour.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Strongly Agree	14.29%	20
Agree	31.43%	44
Neither Agree nor Disagree	35.00%	49
Disagree	15.71%	22
Strongly Disagree	3.57%	5

(Fig.4)

When participants were asked whether they felt bonuses influenced unethical or deviant behaviour, respondents answered as presented below(Fig.5). It was clear from the responses that the participants were conflicted as a significant proportion expressed they neither agreed nor disagreed. It was clear from the findings that there was not much splitting the participants' opinions. The participants who agreed and disagreed with the statement did so in similar numbers. The results suggest bonuses are a cause for concern concerning undesired behaviours, although it may not be the most controversial reward.

<b>Answer</b>	<b>% of Participants</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>8.57%</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>26.43%</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>34.29%</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>28.57%</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>2.14%</b>	<b>3</b>

**(Fig.5)**

When asked whether participants felt the opportunity for promotion influences unethical or deviant behaviour, they responded as presented below(Fig.6). It is clear from the results that the opinions regarding the effect of opportunity for promotion are pretty mixed. There is no standout answer, although the favourite response among participants agreed. The results show respondents feel the opportunity for promotion can influence undesired behaviours; however, it is not as controversial as commission.

<b>Answer</b>	<b>% of Participants</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>7.14%</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>30.71%</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>30.00%</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>27.86%</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>4.29%</b>	<b>6</b>

**(Fig.6)**

Participants responded as presented below when questioned whether non-financial rewards influence deviant or unethical behaviour (Fig.7). The results show a significant proportion of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, with disagree being the second most favourable answer. The results show that survey respondents feel that non-financial rewards aren't the main instigator of unethical or deviant behaviours.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Strongly Agree	5.00%	7
Agree	21.43%	30
Neither Agree nor Disagree	36.43%	51
Disagree	32.14%	45
Strongly Disagree	5.00%	7

**(Fig.7)**

The online survey findings support the research put forward by (Qin et al.,2020), which suggests that performance-dependent rewards are the main reward at fault for harming performance as the survey findings suggest commission is the most likely to encourage deviant or unethical behaviour. The qualitative focus group findings further support this idea as three out of five participants agreed that commission is the primary reward responsible. When asked what participants felt was the cause of deviant or unethical behaviour in the workplace, participant A said, "commission people naturally want more money if they get a chance to rob someone's sale at that time they're thinking of themselves", clearly suggesting commission can influence deviant and unethical behaviour amongst employees. Participant B also supported participant A's statement saying "I agree as well", also supporting the statement participant C added to the conversation saying "it's about commission structure itself" and "the commission structure has huge jump-ups in the commission brackets" and "that can drive deviant behaviour in incredible ways, it affects how much there are deviant and manipulative behaviours". Although participants D and E did not support the consensus that commission was the leading cause, they neither disagreed with the statement but instead suggested different opinions as participant D said, "there's no pressure cause there's no commission" when discussing the non-financial reward structure supporting participant E's statement that said "there are better reward systems" when

mentioning commission which was followed by participant C also supporting non-financial rewards by saying " I'd agree with that I think a very good incentive is time off work".

Qualitative and quantitative research findings suggest that commission is the primary reward responsible for influencing employees to partake in unethical or deviant behaviour. Commission being a controversial reward is a visible trend amongst both sets of findings. Another theme that appeared is non-financial rewards may be the least controversial type of rewards for influencing unethical or deviant rewards amongst employees.

## Motivation

Motivation plays a crucial role in organisational performance, as suggested by Dobre(2013); thus, the role reward systems play in motivating staff is essential for management to understand to aid in improving decision making. When participants were asked if they felt reward systems had a negative or positive impact on motivation, they answered as presented below(Fig.8). The results show a large majority feel reward systems have a positive influence on motivation. The online survey findings suggest rewards are a powerful tool for motivating employees.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Positive Influence	67.86%	95
Negative Influence	22.86%	32

**(Fig.8)**

Similar to the online survey findings when discussing the effects of reward systems on motivation, there were mixed opinions present amongst the participants as three out of five or 60% of the participants expressed how reward systems can positively impact their motivation as participant B stated, "Monthly incentives would definitely motivate staff" when speaking about non-financial rewards such as "team night outs" and "vouchers" which was expressed "does kind of motivate you". Participant A also added to the discussion stating the reward systems "drives you" and explained "if you weren't getting commission you wouldn't be pushing for it(sales)" this statement was also supported by participant C, who added at "the end of the month and they know they're last few sales could make the difference of 600euro in their wages it's significant in motivation". Participant C also expressed the need for an adequate reward structure in place



when motivating staff as it was said, "when I have a system in place, and I like the system, I think it's fair it would motivate me highly" this statement suggest why staff may be demotivated by reward structures within the workplace as it was also mentioned by participant C that regarding reward systems effect on motivation he had "mixed feelings" as " when times are good it's great and very motivating" however "in winter it took motivation from people" as it was explained in the winter months targets are more difficult to meet due to fewer clients. The mixed feelings in regards to the motivation side of rewards were also expressed by participant A who stated, "if it's flat commission only and you're going through spells where it's virtually impossible you cant get big sales then your going to be demotivated" adding to this participant B explained his experience with being demotivated as a result of an inadequate reward structure saying "if you're under pressure in the job and being really closely monitored you're gonna be waking up like I don't want to do this, you don't really have the motivation" in addition to this participant C added " I don't have the motivation to go to work" as a result when there's "very deviant behaviour or if the work culture is poor".

The research findings suggest that reward systems play a crucial role in motivating staff, supporting the suggestion of Armstrong(2012). From the results, it is clear that most survey respondents and focus group participants agreed rewards positively impacted motivation. The research findings also suggest reward systems can have the opposite effect on employee motivation when an inadequate reward structure is in place as suggested in the focus group findings these findings also support Yoon et al.(2015) findings that rewards can harm motivation and suggest poor reward management in regards to the reward structure may be responsible.

## Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge sharing is a source of competitive advantage for organisations and can influence organisational performance(Nonka,1991). Participants were questioned on how reward systems affect their ability to knowledge share within the workplace. When asked how reward systems impact their ability to knowledge sharing, the results were as presented below(Fig.9). The results show respondents are mixed in their opinion as there is no significantly popular response. The results, however, do show more respondents feel reward systems negatively impact their ability

to knowledge share. The results are significant as they suggest rewards do more harm than good to knowledge sharing amongst the sample.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Positive Influence	24.29%	34
Negative Influence	25.00%	35

**(Fig.9)**

Similar to the online survey findings, three of five or 60% of participants mentioned how they've experienced issues with knowledge sharing in the workplace due to reward systems. When discussing any factors of their work that may be impacted in a deviant or unethical manner as previously discussed, participant A stated, "knowledge sharing, if I know someone is going to be calling back at 1 pm and they're looking for a certain person sometimes I wouldn't tell that person". Participant C agreed with the statement and added to it, saying, "best practices are definitely not shared because, for example, I find the right thing to say to a customer to deal with an objection, I'm not gonna share that with my colleagues because we're pitted against each other, so knowledge sharing is negatively affected". Participant B followed this statement by adding "end of the day if you're on commission your not going to share that with the other agents cause they might take them sales off you".

The research findings further strengthen the argument put forward by Salamen & Zamil(2020) that offering rewards does not encourage knowledge sharing, which is a significant concern as stated by Nonka(1991) knowledge sharing is a source of competitive advantage plays a crucial role in influencing organisational performance.

## Creativity

When participants were asked how reward systems impact creativity in the workplace, the responses were as presented below(Fig.10). The online survey results showed that more respondents felt that reward systems positively impacted their creativity than negatively. While more respondents agreed creativity was positively impacted, it was a minority of the respondents which suggests creativity is an insignificant factor. The findings suggest creativity is not a

negatively affected factor concerning reward systems and thus is not responsible for the harmed organisational performance or associated with the undermining effect suggested by(Qin et al.(2020).

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Positive Influence	32.86%	46
Negative Influence	13.57%	19

**(Fig.10)**

## Workplace Behaviour

When participants were questioned whether reward systems positively or negatively impact workplace behaviour, the results were presented below(Fig.11).

The results of the online survey showed more respondents felt reward systems positively impact workplace behaviour. Although the respondents felt rewards positively impact their workplace behaviour, the results were close, suggesting a mixed opinion among the sample.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Positive Influence	26.46%	37
Negative Influence	22.86%	32

**(Fig.11)**

When questioned whether reward systems could encourage unethical or deviant behaviour amongst employees in the workplace, as suggested by Magnusson & Endler(1977), the responses are shown below(Fig.12).

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Strongly Agree	16.43%	23
Agree	35.71%	50
Neither Agree nor Disagree	32.86%	46
Disagree	12.14%	17

Strongly Disagree	2.86%	4
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(Fig.12)

The online survey findings showed that the most favourable opinion amongst the sample was Agree. A significant amount of the respondents were also undecided. The results clearly show that a large proportion of the sample feel reward systems can encourage unethical or deviant behaviour.

The online survey findings support the undermining effect Qin et al.(2020) presented in the literature review. The undermining effect suggested that rewards can result in undesired behavioural effects, and this opinion was also present within the qualitative focus group findings as four out of five or 80% of participants recalled and discussed how rewards had influenced unwanted behaviours in their experience within the workplace.

When discussing the effects of reward systems on workplace behaviour, participants A, B, C, and E all agreed rewards systems influence undesired behaviour. When talking about workplace behavior they have experienced as a result participant C said regarding commission "people would actually go out of their way to make others sales worse" then recalled a time where he was directly affected stating another employee had attempted to harm his performance stating "she actually went on my computer then done rentals(sales) off my computer which were bad rentals(sales) but then it means I have less commission for the month and she'd have more" he then went onto explain (the main thing that happened)(was dodging clients) stating that fellow employees (would literally go to the bathroom, leave the office so they don't have to make that sale and then somebody else would be stuck with a bad sale which makes them have less commission for the month) this undesired behavior came as a result of the commission structure with the workplace and the fact that staff had an idea of the type of clients which they would be dealing with as he said they would know which clients "don't spend as much money" which influenced the employees as act as he stated by "dodging clients".

Participant E also went on to agree with the points put forward, stating employees in his workplace "would often come in and take them sales and transfer them to us and we would end up getting the negative outcome" when discussing how employees would avoid specific clients

to protect their commission or conversion percentage. Participant E also went on to explain techniques used by employees to avoid specific clients which would supposedly harm these commission rates saying " people will be halfway through the chat and they realise these people are moving abroad and the employee's systems will shut down and the call will drop so the customer will call back into you."

Further supporting the statement from other respondents, participant A added to the conversation saying, "same with my job people used to rob each other sales" explaining "with bad leads sales agents would try to shift it" and "if you know your not getting a sale you'd try transfer it through, so the conversion looks better".

Participant B also added to the discussion stating, "the system we used you could pretty much see what clients are most interested so it came to a stage where some people would be stealing each other's clients because you want to have your highest performance and you want to get them monthly incentives."

The focus group findings make it evident that commission as a reward system in these cases influenced undesired behaviours amongst employees, supporting what was unveiled by the online survey findings and further consolidating the undermining effect touted by Qin et al.(2020). These findings also solidify the statement put forward by Jansen & Glinlow(1985) that in some cases, when reward systems are utilised, "honesty is punished and dishonesty is rewarded". It is evident in these cases outlined in the focus group that employees are benefiting from avoiding clients or stealing sales/leads from fellow employees.

In contrast to the findings discussing commissions effect on workplace behaviour, participant D explaining when working under a non-financial rewards system it had a positive impact on workplace behaviour as stated "it does push ye to engage with the customers" this statement supports the findings that non-financial rewards are the less controversial reward in influencing undesired workplace behaviour".

## Workplace Culture

As suggested by Armstrong(2012), workplace culture is influenced by the reward system within the organisation. The workplace culture affects the organisation's performance, highlighting the importance of workplace culture in organisational terms. When participants were asked whether they felt reward systems benefit the workplace culture, the results were as shown below(Fig.13). The results show that the most popular opinion amongst the sample was that the participants agreed reward systems benefit the workplace culture. A significant amount of the respondents were undecided on the topic, however. The results show a mixed opinion, although most of the sample feel reward systems benefit workplace culture.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Strongly Agree	13.57%	19
Agree	36.43%	51
Neither Agree nor Disagree	32.86%	46
Disagree	13.57%	19
Strongly Disagree	3.57%	5

(Fig.13)

In contrast to the online survey, the focus group findings suggested the opposite as four out of five or 80% of the participants discussed how the reward system harms the workplace culture. Participant D stated when targets are unrealistic or difficult to achieve, "staff feel like they're doing their best and they're not hitting the targets" and explained it "creates a toxic atmosphere" and the "workplace culture can be very negative". Participant C also had a similar opinion regarding the topic stating it "it creates a horrible work environment and bad relationships between employees" when speaking of employees stealing sales and leads. Participant A discussed how a toxic workplace culture was developed that promoted stealing of clients as it was said " same with my job people used to rob each other's sales" "and sales directors didn't care who was getting the commission once the company was getting the money" and added, "a sales agent does it so they're numbers are better, the manager does it so they're team looks better and their commissions better and the sales directors don't care cause they're hitting targets as well

so no one cares once their own benefits are being looked after". Participants C also added a recommendation to how organisations may avoid creating a toxic workplace culture when employing reward systems saying "I started in a new company where we were given our exact leads, these leads can't be changed or altered so nobody's against each other, so it brings us together", "if you can set up a reward system where it doesn't set employees against each other but it sets employees with each other then it can highly effect work culture in a very positive way". Participant C also argued "but in most companies the way it's set up(reward systems) I really negatively effects culture and workplace attitudes".

The focus group findings presented a consensus between the participants, suggesting that reward systems encourage deviant or unethical behaviour and develop toxic workplace behaviour. However, the focus group findings contradict the online survey findings as the focus group depicts a toxic workplace culture and contrasting this image, the online survey suggests reward systems benefit the workplace culture.

## Job Satisfaction

As stated by Rutherford et al.(2019), job satisfaction plays a crucial role in influencing organisational performance; thus, reward systems' role in affecting job satisfaction levels is key to understanding sales staff performance. When asked whether they felt rewards systems positively or negatively impacted their performance, the sample answered as presented below(Fig.14). The online survey results show that most of the sample believe reward systems positively influence job satisfaction levels. The results indicate reward systems are a powerful tool for increasing job satisfaction levels among sales staff.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Positive Influence	44.29%	62
Negative Influence	27.14%	38

**(Fig.14)**

Similarly to the online survey findings, two out of five or 40% of participants mentioned the use of reward systems negatively impacted job satisfaction as participant D stated, "I'd be more

inclined to go for a job which has a solid base salary" "cause I don't have the pressure on me of having to come into work stressed over certain things out of my control" implying that reward systems and the pressure associated with meeting the targets result in some employees being unsatisfied by the work conditions which causes them to favour an alternative career. Participant E agreed with the statement made as he mentioned, "I don't think I'd ever look for a commission job going forward that would be something I'd probably want to avoid".

The research findings support the findings of Sarwar & Abugre(2013) that states rewards are a motivator of job satisfaction; however, the research findings do not support the work of Sarwar & Abugre(2013) to the same extent. The literature review states 95.19% agree rewards improve job satisfaction. The research conducted finds lower levels of agreement at just 44.29%; also, focus group insights depict a contrasting image which instead supports the findings of Maratano et al.(2018), which states rewards have no real effect on job satisfaction levels as similarly no focus group participants spoke of any positive impact on job satisfaction levels.

## Managerial Pressure

The focus group findings presented a theme that suggests that managerial pressure may influence deviant or unethical behaviour amongst employees. Regarding reward systems, participant B stated, "it can be a negative as it puts you under more pressure", "if they ever missed one day they would be under pressure", the statements suggest that management closely monitor employees to ensure they achieve targets this was also supported by participant A who stated "people would rob sales for their own commission is one thing but to be honest I think a lot of people done it from pressure from the managers" Participant A also stated, "a lot of the time it isn't deviant for your own good it's from managers to be reaching targets". Participant B suggested the managerial pressure is a result of closely monitoring staff as it was stated, "managers don't really trust you it's very monitored" in response, participant A said, "so it's micromanagement", to which participant B agreed. Participant E also stated regarding the topic "the micromanagement that's the most detrimental part I think" "day to day pressure of your manager watching every call or listening to every call". The findings suggest that reward systems may lead to added pressure on employees and management, resulting in undesired behaviours



from both employees and management in the form of unethical or deviant behaviour and strict monitoring of employees.

## Security

Although the online survey did not investigate the effect reward systems have on security for employees, it was an identified theme that was present in the focus group findings. The consensus of the focus group suggested that the use of reward systems such as commission can be a deterrent when applying for jobs due to the lack of financial security related to these roles. Participant A stated, "lack of security it needs to be a bonus rather than putting food on the table" similarly, participant C said, "if it's lower salary and huge commission that would be a turnoff for me, but if it's the opposite way around and it's high salary and commission is more of a bonus rather than putting food on the table then that can be quite attractive to me", participant B supported the statements adding "I definitely think high base salary would be the most important thing" "I definitely think having a bit more security does help". Participant D also added to the discussion stating "I'd be more inclined to go for a job which has a solid base salary". The statements concerning security in the focus group suggest the participants would be more inclined to choose a secure job opportunity. The financial uncertainty of working in a heavily reward incentivised role deters experienced workers as stated by participant C, "If I'm a bit older, then you need that job security."

## Turnover

Organisational commitment and performance are affected by staff turnover(Rutherford et al.,2019); therefore, respondents were questioned on the effect of reward systems on their loyalty of attractiveness to an organisation. The participants responded as shown below(Fig.15). The results showed that agree was the most favourable answer amongst the sample. The results indicate that a significant majority of the sample believe that rewards systems would improve their loyalty to a job or organisation. The results are skewed as a large proportion of the sample agree with the statement suggesting a solid consensus among sales staff.

<b>Answer</b>	<b>% of Participants</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>12.86%</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>40.71%</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>27.14%</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>12.86%</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>6.43%</b>	<b>9</b>

**(Fig.15)**

When asked if participants would seek job opportunities based on the reward systems, participants responded as presented below(Fig.16). The results show a large proportion of the sample are undecided as the most popular answer was neither agree nor disagree. The second most favourable answer was agree, which indicates that many sales staff are attracted to job opportunities that offer rewards. The results show that rewards systems may be a helpful tool for attracting sales staff.

<b>Answer</b>	<b>% of Participants</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>10.71%</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>29.29%</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>38.57%</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>14.29%</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>7.14%</b>	<b>10</b>

**(Fig.16)**

The focus group findings contrasted with the survey findings regarding turnover and retention four out of five or 80% of respondents voiced negative impacts of reward systems regarding retention. When discussing the issue of staff turnover participant C discussed his experience on the matter stating "the conflict is incredible, the staff turnover is insane people come in and then after a month or two they see what the cultures like and they leave, I recently left and it was one of the main reasons" participant C also stated "in terms of staff retention anyway there would be

so many employees which start and within one months their gone purely because of the pressure they're put under with the sales and the work culture which has stemmed from the sales targets". When discussing the effects on employees appeal to applying for jobs that utilise reward systems participant A stated "In terms of applying for jobs I'd definitely would be looking for somewhere you're has a base salary as well because the idea of all your income being decided by performance, a lot of it is out of your hands it's nice to have that security, commission is a monthly bonus not the only form of income, it would put ye off in a sense if that was the only way your getting paid" agreeing with this statement participant C mentioned "my loyalty for a job is pretty much non existent" "because how bad the work culture was from sales" "if it's lower salary and high commission that would be a big turn off for me", participant C also stated "In my opinion I'd say job security is really attractive when looking for a job so commission can be a negative for that and then in terms of retention then it's the culture that keeps you in a job". Participant B stated "i definitely think that high base salary would be the most important, when you work in sales the agents don't last in the job that long" adding to this participant E stated" I don't think I'd ever look for a commission job going forward that would be something I'd probably want to avoid at most".

The focus group findings made it clear that the participants had strong negative opinions regarding reward systems concerning staff retention and attractiveness to job opportunities; however, these opinions were in stark contrast to online survey findings. The findings suggest the inconsistencies may be due to the salary rewards balance. The sales rewards balance was expressed as participants' primary concern throughout the focus group findings. The online survey cannot delve into these deeper insights; therefore, it is hypothesised that this factor is responsible for the contrasting results.

## Performance

Performance is ultimately the critical reason reward systems are utilised within an organisation as they aim to improve the performance of the employee and organisation as a whole(Omolawal & Bawalla,2017). The results were as shown below when participants were asked if rewards systems improved their performance (Fig.17). The results show that respondents were of the

agreement that reward systems do improve performance. The large majority who agreed with the statement suggests a consensus among sales staff that reward systems are critical to improving performance.

<b>Answer</b>	<b>% of Participants</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>17.86%</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>58.57%</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>17.86%</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>5.00%</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>0.71%</b>	<b>1</b>

**(Fig.17)**

When asked if reward systems negatively impact performance, the sample answered as presented below(Fig.18). The online survey results show clearly that the sample believed reward systems do not negatively impact performance. The majority of the sample disagreed with the statement indicating rewards are a valuable tool for influencing performance.

<b>Answer</b>	<b>% of Participants</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>7.14%</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Agree</b>	<b>10.00%</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>20.00%</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Disagree</b>	<b>50.71%</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>12.14%</b>	<b>17</b>

**(Fig.18)**

Participants were asked whether reward systems influence them to work harder they answered as shown below(Fig.19). The results made it clear that the sample agrees with the statement as the majority of respondents agreed. The results show that reward systems are an effective tool for encouraging staff to work harder.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Strongly Agree	19.29%	27
Agree	49.29%	69
Neither Agree nor Disagree	23.57%	33
Disagree	5.71%	8
Strongly Disagree	2.14%	3

(Fig.19)

The participants were also questioned when staff is expectant of a guaranteed pay package irrespective of their input is their input negatively impacted the results were as shown below(Fig.20). The results show that the most popular response was neither agree nor disagree, suggesting most respondents are undecided. The second most popular answer among the sample was agree, which means sales staff require some form of rewards to achieve maximum performance output.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Strongly Agree	13.57%	19
Agree	27.14%	38
Neither Agree nor Disagree	37.86%	53
Disagree	20.00%	28
Strongly Disagree	1.43%	2

(Fig.20)

The online survey findings support the suggestions of Omolawal & Bawalla(2017) that reward systems play a crucial role in improving organisational performance. The results show that most participants signified that reward systems improve their performance and encourage them to work harder. The majority suggested that reward systems do not harm their performance.

In contrast, the focus group findings identified a theme concerning rewards harming the employee's performance and the organisation. Three of five or 60% of the participants voiced opinions on how rewards systems negatively impacted performance. Participant A stated "in terms of how it affects your performance it's the extreme end of both, when things are going good you are performing much better than you would without it but if things are going bad your going in with a worse mindset and probably performing worse because of it" in agreement to this statement participant E stated how customers can be badly affected as a result saying "the customer can be really affected badly from it cause they sign up do something that's a terrible price and terrible service" which described how rewards can influence bad customer service by pushing for targets. Participant C also supported these statements as he stated " the workers in the office gets one of these rentals(sales) you know your not going to get any bonuses, but that also hugely affects customer service" "that leads to bad customer service and clients in a negative mindset about the company and there's no way they're going to come back". Participant A also supported these statements adding "your less friendly with customers so your performance isn't as good" "and "your performance overall is going to be effected".

The focus group findings suggest that negative impacts of performance due to rewards are not isolated incidents. The results suggest reward systems do not only influence adverse effects of performance as it was also stated by participant A" when things are going well you are performing much better than you would without it" and as stated by participant C, "it would motivate me highly" when discussing a "fair" reward system. The research findings suggest isolated incidents that harm performance may be caused by inadequate or unfair reward systems. The research findings compare to the Wells Fargo scandal, which saw reward mismanagement significantly damage organisational performance.

## The Undermining Effect

The undermining effect states that reward systems, in some cases, may encourage undesired behaviours such as deviant and unethical behaviour, which may harm organisational performance(Qin et al.,2020). The online survey questioned whether reward systems ever negatively impacted any of the following factors to identify which factors are being harmed by reward systems and thus responsible for the undermining effect. The results of the online survey question were as shown below(Fig.21). The results show that job satisfaction is the most negatively impacted factor relating to reward systems, while knowledge sharing, workplace behaviour and motivation is also significantly affected.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Motivation	22.86%	32
Job Satisfaction	27.14%	38
Knowledge Sharing	25.00%	35
Creativity	13.57%	19
Workplace Behaviour	22.86%	32

(Fig.21)

In contrast to these findings, the results were as shown below when questioned if reward systems positively influenced any of the factors (Fig.22). The results show that motivation is the factor that is most positively impacted by reward systems. The results show that among sales staff, motivation is the most beneficial factor concerning reward systems. The results indicate rewards are effective in motivating sales staff.

Answer	% of Participants	Number of Participants
Motivation	67.86%	95
Job Satisfaction	44.29%	62
Knowledge Sharing	24.29%	34

<b>Creativity</b>	<b>32.86%</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Workplace Behaviour</b>	<b>26.43%</b>	<b>37</b>

**(Fig.22)**

The online survey findings suggest the reasoning for the undermining effect seen throughout the literature review may be the high levels of negatively impacted job satisfaction 27.14% caused by reward systems or the impact on knowledge sharing, which 25% agreed was negatively affected and only 24.29% seen positive effects regarding knowledge sharing.

## Discussion

The research aimed to challenge the consensus that reward systems are pivotal to improving organisational performance. The literature review provided inconsistencies regarding the topic area, which supported the idea of delving further into the topic and attempting to develop new insights and outlooks concerning the research question. The hypothesis, which was developed from reviewing the literature, suggested that reward systems may have an undesired effect, also known as the undermining effect(Qin et al.,2020) on employees and the organisation; thus, the research was conducted developed to explore this phenomenon.

When conducting a literature review before the research, it was identified that factors such as knowledge sharing, job satisfaction, motivation, and creativity were pivotal to organisational performance(Nonka,1991, Ostroff,1992, Dobre,2013, Katarzyna & Olha,2014). The literature review also uncovered that there is a consensus that reward systems positively influence these factors(Sarwar & Abugre,2013, Heffernan et al.,2016, Martano et al.,2018, Sheikh,2019, Salameh & Zamil,2020) thus are beneficial to performance despite some opposition to this consensus. The factors that were shown to play a critical role in improving organisational performance provided a basis for the research. The inconsistencies found in the research such as the negative impacts(Yoon et al.,2015, Martano et al.,2018, Salameh & Zamil,2020) on the aforementioned factors in addition to the further detrimental effects such as the undermining effect(Qin et al.,2020) and the reward system perspective(Jansen & Glow,1985) presented a rationale for exploring the topic to identify and develop new insights regarding the topic.



In an attempt to understand what the research findings mean in light of the literature review, it is essential to discuss what the quantitative online survey findings identified regarding the research topic. The main takeaways from the survey findings showed that, as suggested in the literature review, reward systems improve the motivation and performance of the survey sample (i.e. Irish sales employees). The findings also paralleled the literature as it identified an undesired side effect of reward systems as the undermining effect (Qin et al., 2020) and the reward systems perspective (Jansen & Glinlow, 1985) suggested. It was clear from the online survey that salespeople believed that reward systems negatively impacted their job satisfaction. The reasoning for this was identified by delving further into the findings as rewards were said to be responsible for influencing deviant or unethical behaviour caused mainly by commission. The findings paint a picture of the situation which may occur within sales departments across Ireland. It is evident reward systems influence employees to work harder and motivate them, which encourages unethical deviant behaviour amongst employees to achieve goals and targets by any means possible. This situation is similar to the Wells Fargo fiasco (Levine, 2018) as it leads to unsatisfied employees who are affected by both the pressure of targets set and the consequences of unethical or deviant behaviour amongst fellow employees. The qualitative focus group was then developed to delve further into the topic and create a fuller understanding of this phenomenon by extracting qualitative insights.

The focus group findings told a similar story regarding the topic as the online survey findings; however, it successfully created a deeper insight into the topic. The focus group findings supported and strengthened the argument developed by the online survey findings. The emphasis on commission reward structures heavily motivates sales staff to work harder to meet targets; however, this is without drawbacks. It was made evident that as employees work harder to reach targets, they are not willing to share best practices with fellow employees as it was shown knowledge sharing is negatively impacted. The findings also made it clear from the insights gained that managerial pressure is a factor that has contributed towards the undesired workplace behaviour, which consequently in many sales departments results in a "toxic workplace culture".

The significance of these findings ultimately shows that the combination of these factors within the sales department results in unsatisfied employees who work against fellow employees to achieve targets rather than with each other. Hence, these behaviours have a severe effect on turnover and performance. In terms of turnover, potential employees are deterred from working within the sales environment from past experiences in toxic workplaces, and crucially, performance is being harmed as driven salespeople prioritise targets over the customer, resulting in poor customer service and negatively impacting the customer experience.

Past research surrounding the topic generally focuses on the individual factors discussed in the literature review, such as motivation, job satisfaction, knowledge sharing, etc., and the effect reward systems have on these factors exclusively. This research conducted alternatively focuses on the reward systems effect on the combination of the factors and how they interact, which ultimately influences the organisation's performance.

The research conducted paints a picture of the actions of the typical sales department in Ireland due to the reward systems in place and provides future management with insights which to consider when deciding upon the design of the reward system. The research presents practical implications to designing reward systems that emphasise commission heavy individual rewards and suggests alternatives for management such as designing team-orientated reward systems to irradicate the undesired or unethical deviant behaviour, which plays a central role throughout the research.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, on the surface, reward systems evidently portray a valuable and effective tool for rewarding overachieving employees. The reality of reward systems in the Irish sales context, however, is not as straightforward. The research conducted identified worrying themes throughout regarding reward systems.

The use of commission, in particular, was shown to encourage harming employee behaviours and, in many cases, was the root of adverse side effects experienced within the workplace. It was

identified within the research the problems regarding reward systems were associated with mismanagement rather than rewards themselves. It is clear that within many Irish sales environments, rewards systems have been poorly developed and monitored. The reward mismanagement, in essence, can be held accountable for a significant amount of the deviant and undesired behaviour experienced within these environments.

The lack of balance, fairness and adequate monitoring of the reward systems has encouraged in these cases much undesired behaviours such as stealing clients and employee conflict. Incompetent reward management leads to undesired behaviour, but ultimately, it is detrimental to the organisation's performance. It was shown throughout the research findings how reward management incompetence harms performance as customer service and satisfaction is overlooked.

The organisation's ability to attain and retain talent is also harmed from reward mismanagement as unfair reward systems which reward employees for deviant behaviour creates toxic work environments and workplace culture.

To conclude, the research suggests that the Irish Sales manager and teams must develop fair and balanced reward systems to maximise the value and output of their salespeople effectively. Management must adequately monitor and consult salespeople if they are to establish a reward system that fits their organisation and improves performance rather than harm it. Finally, reward systems are valuable and effective tools for improving employee and organisational performance but only when utilised correctly and appropriately.

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# Appendix

## Focus Group Question Sheet

### Q1

- What has been your experiences working with reward systems how do you feel they have impacted your performance?

### Q2

- Have you experienced any negative impacts from rewards systems concerning you or fellow employees such as unethical or deviant behaviour please discuss?

### Q3

- What do you feel is the cause of the deviant behaviour and how can this be fixed please discuss.

### Q4

- Does this deviant behaviour impact your work in any factors such as job satisfaction, motivation, creativity, knowledge sharing or workplace behaviour

### Q5

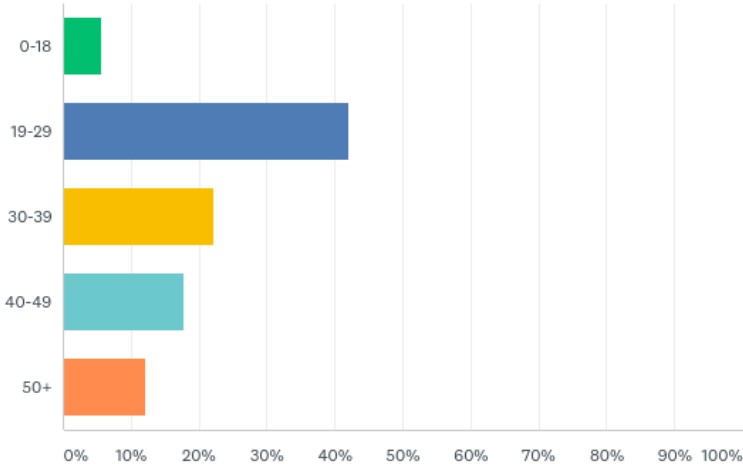
- Does the use of reward systems influence you to apply for a job or your loyalty to a job and why please discuss

# Online Survey Questions

## Q.1

What is your age

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

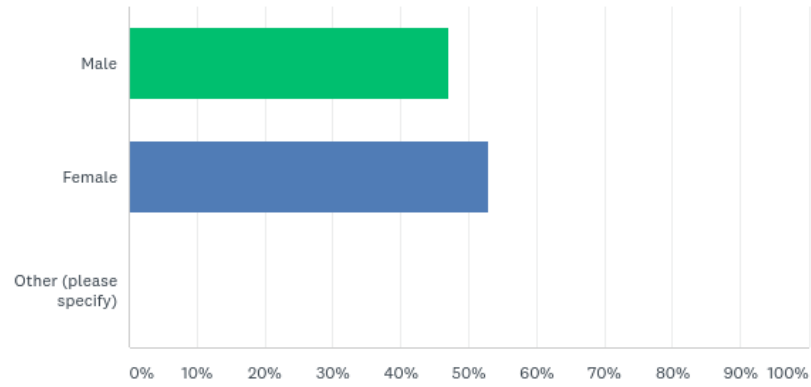


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ 0-18	5.71% 8
▼ 19-29	42.14% 59
▼ 30-39	22.14% 31
▼ 40-49	17.86% 25
▼ 50+	12.14% 17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

## Q.2

### What is your gender

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

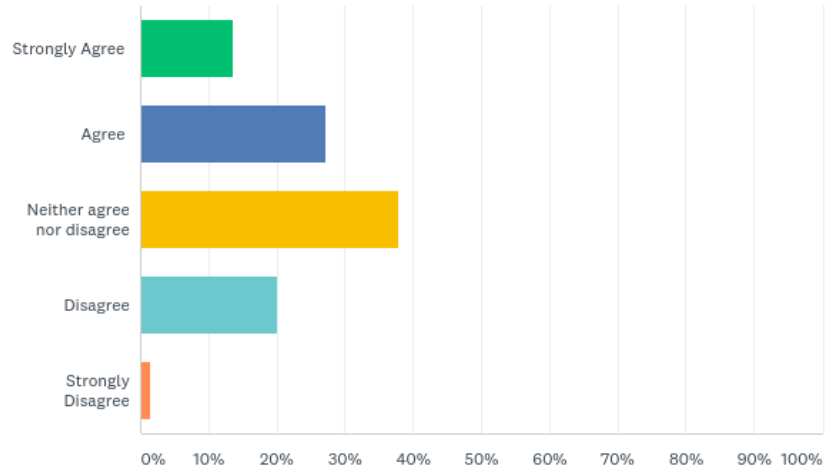


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Male	47.14%	66
▼ Female	52.86%	74
▼ Other (please specify)	<a href="#">Responses</a> 0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>140</b>

### Q.3

When the employee is expectant of a guaranteed pay package irrespective of input their input is negatively impacted.

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

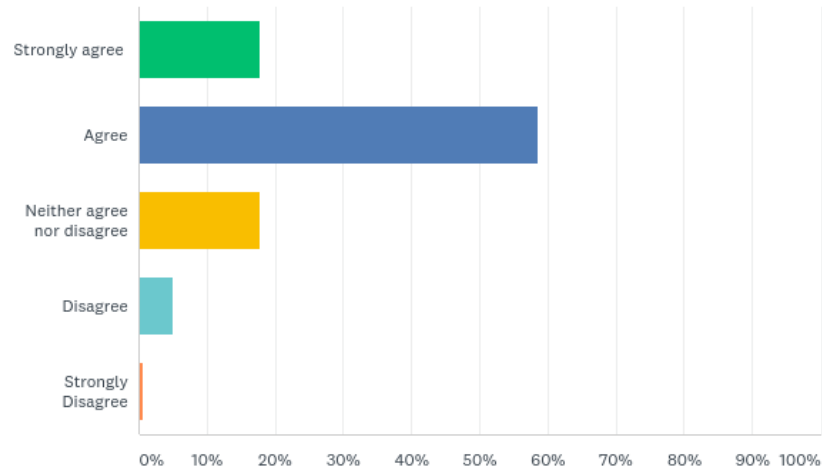


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly Agree	13.57% 19
Agree	27.14% 38
Neither agree nor disagree	37.86% 53
Disagree	20.00% 28
Strongly Disagree	1.43% 2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

## Q.4

### Reward systems improve my performance

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

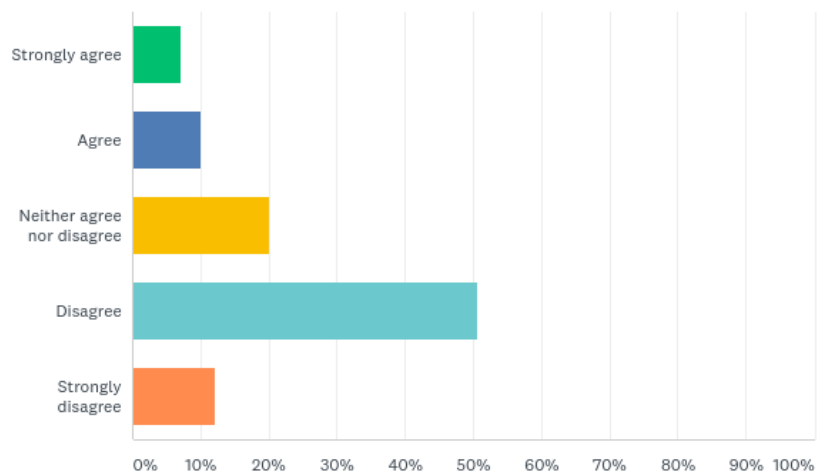


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	17.86% 25
Agree	58.57% 82
Neither agree nor disagree	17.86% 25
Disagree	5.00% 7
Strongly Disagree	0.71% 1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

## Q.5

### Reward systems negatively affect my performance

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

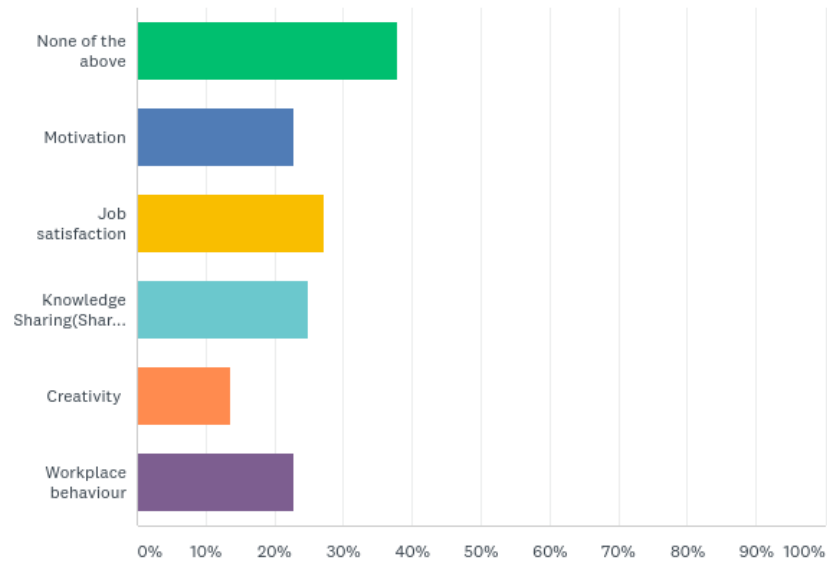


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	7.14% 10
Agree	10.00% 14
Neither agree nor disagree	20.00% 28
Disagree	50.71% 71
Strongly disagree	12.14% 17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

## Q.6

In your experience have reward systems ever had a negative influence on your work in one or more of the following factors

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

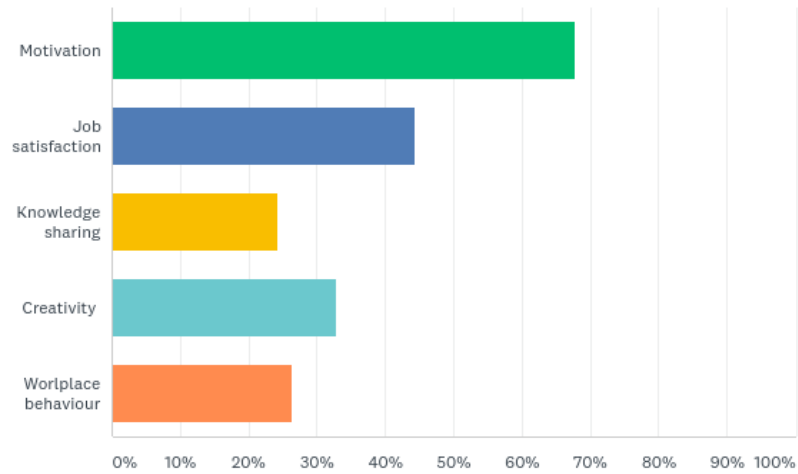


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
None of the above	37.86% 53
Motivation	22.86% 32
Job satisfaction	27.14% 38
Knowledge Sharing(Sharing information with fellow employees)	25.00% 35
Creativity	13.57% 19
Workplace behaviour	22.86% 32
<b>Total Respondents: 140</b>	

## Q.7

In your experience have reward systems ever had a positive influence on your work in one of more of the following factors

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0



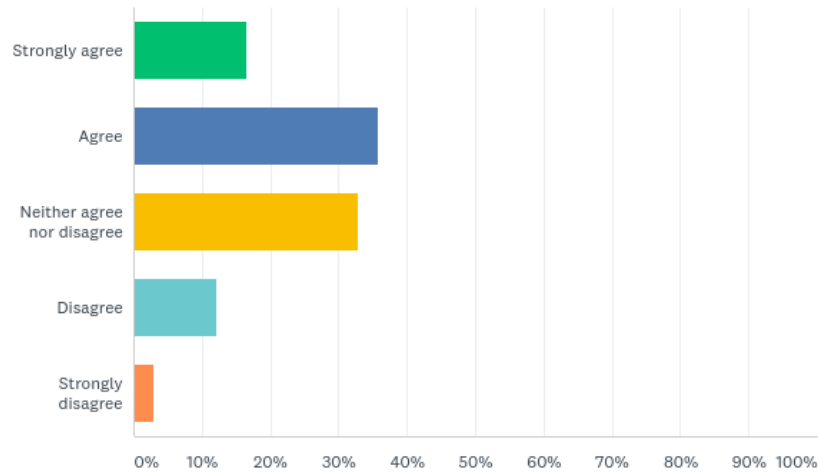
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
▼ Motivation	67.86% 95
▼ Job satisfaction	44.29% 62
▼ Knowledge sharing	24.29% 34
▼ Creativity	32.86% 46
▼ Workplace behaviour	26.43% 37
<b>Total Respondents: 140</b>	



## Q.8

Reward systems can encourage unethical behavior(Stealing clients from fellow employees, Not following the procedure in order to push sales, withholding information from stakeholders, etc.) amongst employees in the workplace.

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

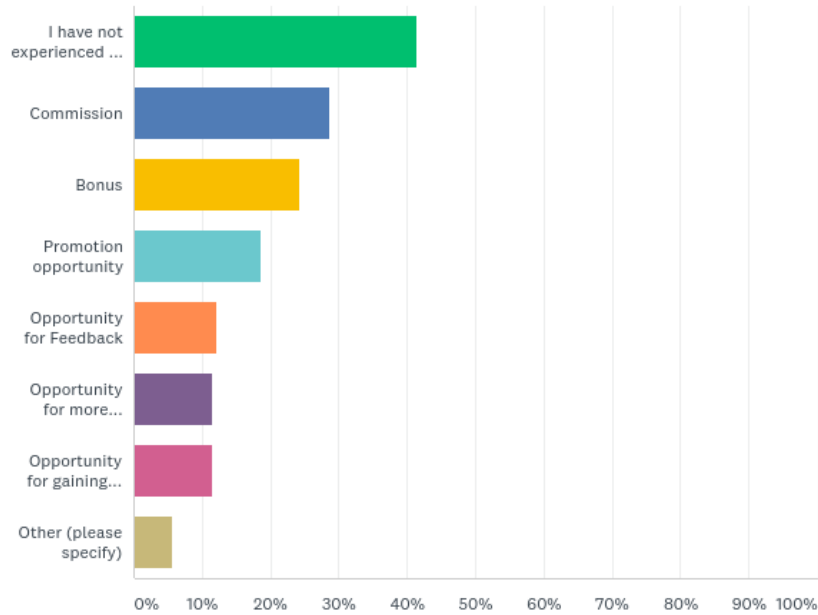


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	16.43% 23
Agree	35.71% 50
Neither agree nor disagree	32.86% 46
Disagree	12.14% 17
Strongly disagree	2.86% 4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

## Q.9

If you have experienced negative effects or witnessed negative effects influenced by reward systems which form of reward system was responsible

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

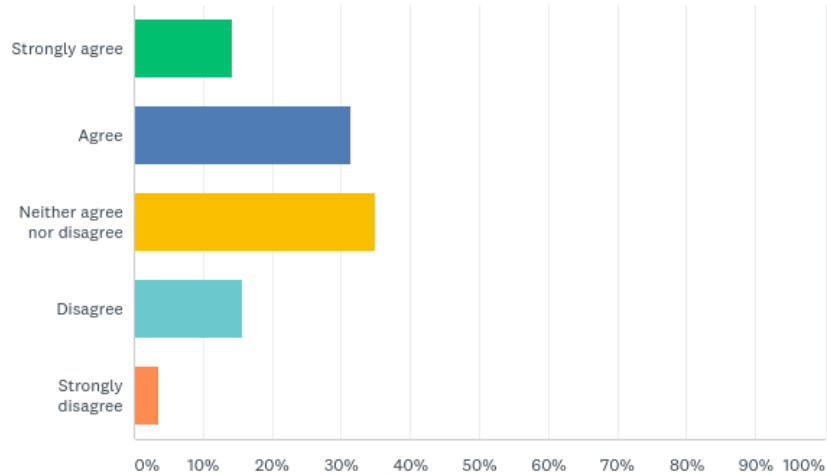


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ I have not experienced any negative effects	41.43%	58
▼ Commission	28.57%	40
▼ Bonus	24.29%	34
▼ Promotion opportunity	18.57%	26
▼ Opportunity for Feedback	12.14%	17
▼ Opportunity for more responsibility	11.43%	16
▼ Opportunity for gaining authority	11.43%	16
▼ Other (please specify)	Responses 5.71%	8
<b>Total Respondents: 140</b>		

## Q.10

### Commission influences deviant/unethical behaviour amongst employees

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

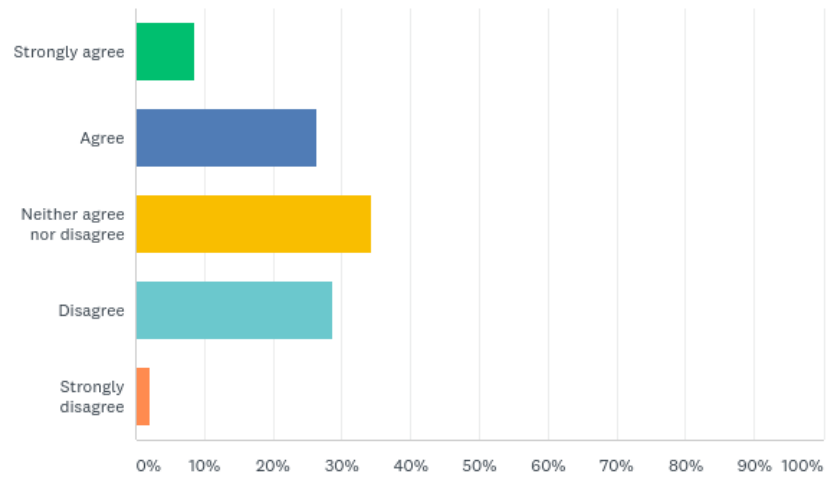


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	14.29% 20
Agree	31.43% 44
Neither agree nor disagree	35.00% 49
Disagree	15.71% 22
Strongly disagree	3.57% 5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

## Q.11

### Bonuses influences deviant/unethical behaviour amongst employees

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

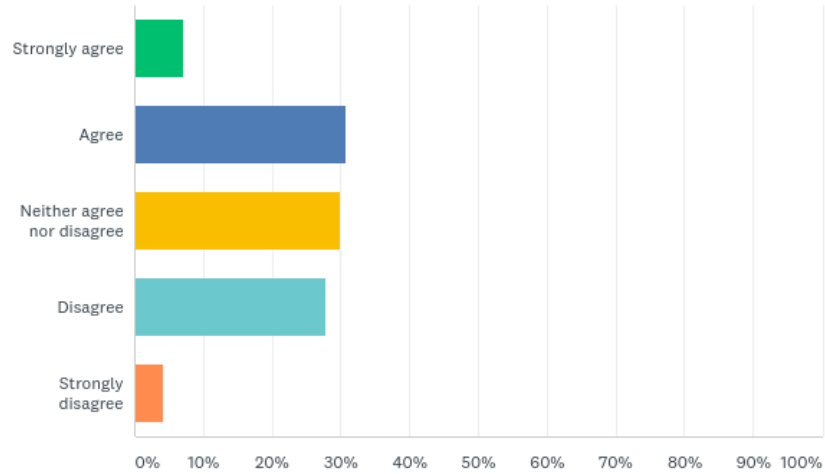


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	8.57% 12
Agree	26.43% 37
Neither agree nor disagree	34.29% 48
Disagree	28.57% 40
Strongly disagree	2.14% 3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

## Q.12

Promotion opportunities influence deviant/unethical behaviors amongst employees

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

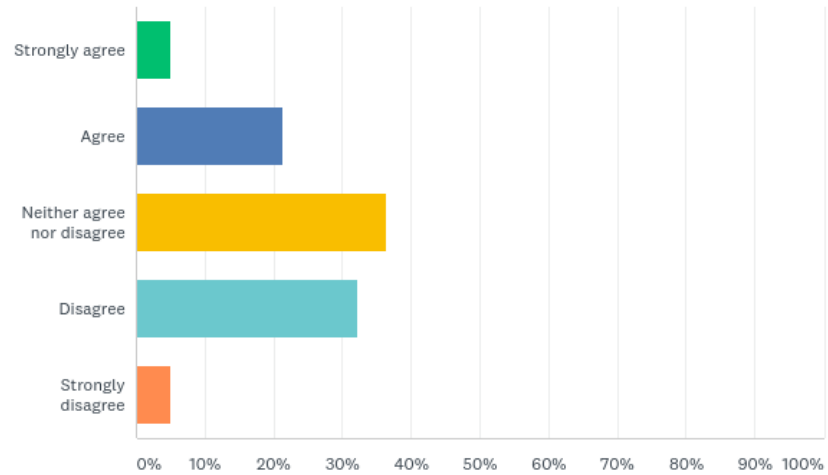


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	7.14% 10
Agree	30.71% 43
Neither agree nor disagree	30.00% 42
Disagree	27.86% 39
Strongly disagree	4.29% 6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

### Q.13

Non-financial rewards influence deviant/unethical behavior amongst employees

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

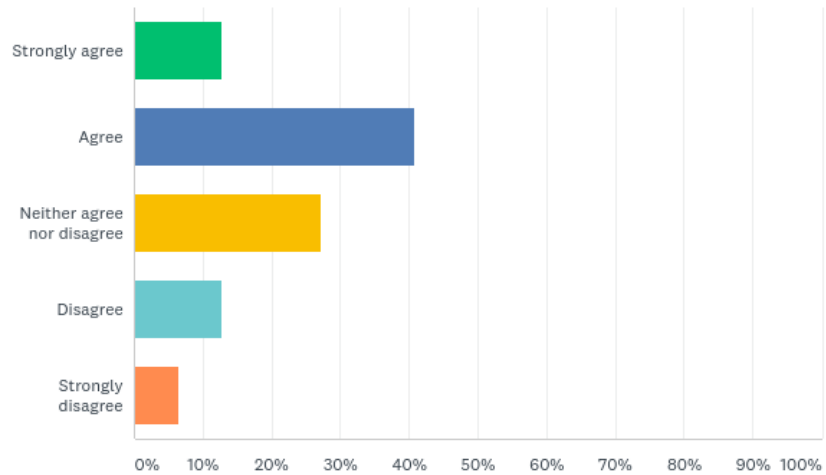


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	5.00% 7
Agree	21.43% 30
Neither agree nor disagree	36.43% 51
Disagree	32.14% 45
Strongly disagree	5.00% 7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

## Q.14

### Reward systems improve my loyalty to my job/organization

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

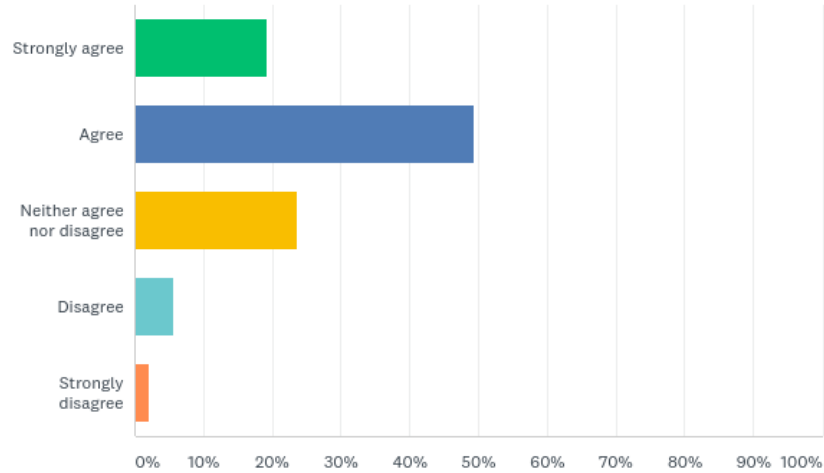


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	12.86% 18
Agree	40.71% 57
Neither agree nor disagree	27.14% 38
Disagree	12.86% 18
Strongly disagree	6.43% 9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

## Q.15

### Reward systems influence me to work harder

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0



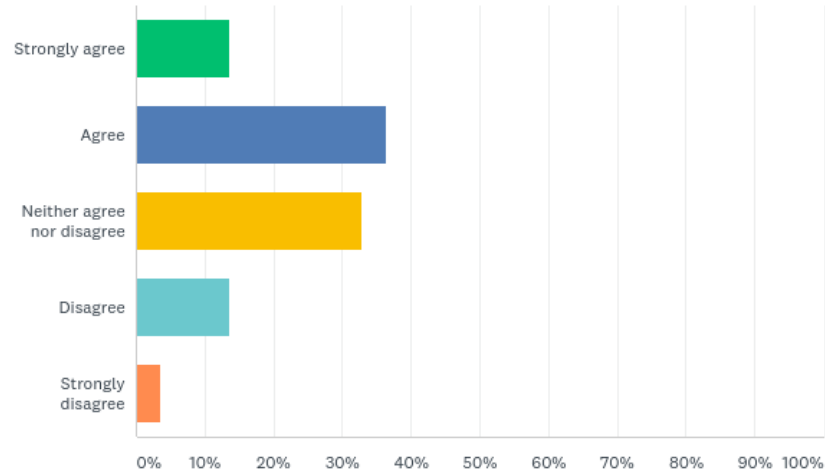
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	19.29% 27
Agree	49.29% 69
Neither agree nor disagree	23.57% 33
Disagree	5.71% 8
Strongly disagree	2.14% 3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>



## Q.16

### Reward systems benefit the workplace culture

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0

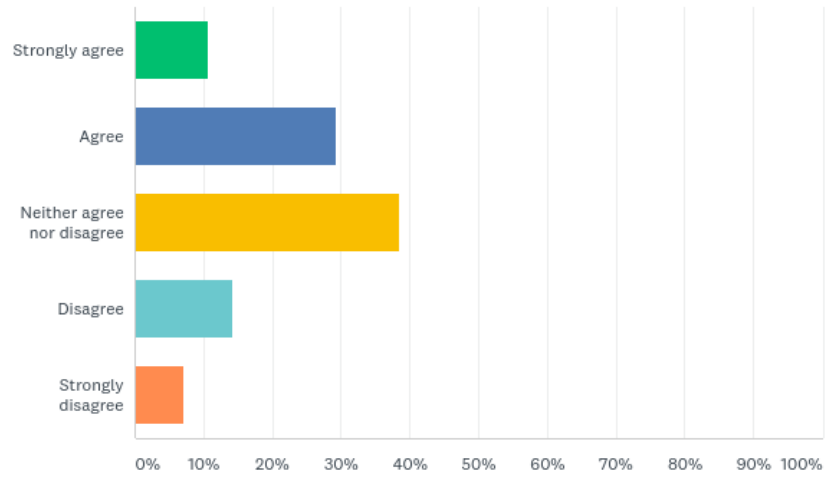


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Strongly agree	13.57% 19
Agree	36.43% 51
Neither agree nor disagree	32.86% 46
Disagree	13.57% 19
Strongly disagree	3.57% 5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>140</b>

### Q.17

I seek out job opportunities that have reward systems in place

Answered: 140 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Strongly agree	10.71%	15
Agree	29.29%	41
Neither agree nor disagree	38.57%	54
Disagree	14.29%	20
Strongly disagree	7.14%	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>140</b>