

## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND ENGAGEMENT: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR JOB SATISFACTION AMONG ACADEMIC STAFF OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*In this era of global changes, organizations that implement structured recognition programs often experience higher levels of employee engagement and reduced turnover. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to look at how employee recognition and engagement affect the job satisfaction of Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria. The specific objectives are to: (i) examine the extent to which employee recognition affect job satisfaction of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria (ii) determine the effect of employee engagement on attitude to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. The study adopted cross sectional survey design. Structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Six (6) Federal Universities were selected across the North-Central, Nigeria. A sample of 374 academic staff of the selected Universities were selected from a population of 13,708 using Krejcie and Morgan sample size determination formula. Simple random sampling technique was used for the study. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis at 0.05% significant level. The findings of the study were that: Employee recognition has significant effect on job satisfaction: (Performance based promotion/Awards)  $\beta = 0.310$ ,  $t = 4.101$ ,  $p = 0.000$  and (Welfare package)  $\beta = 0.259$ ,  $t = 3.522$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ; Employee engagement has a significant effect on attitude to work: (Role engagement)  $\beta = 0.484$ ,  $t = 6.571$ ,  $p = 0.000$  and (Task engagement)  $\beta = 0.187$ ,  $t = 3.054$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ; The study concluded that employee recognition and engagement can immensely improve job satisfaction and attitude to work among the academic staff of the selected Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. The study therefore, recommended that universities should provide welfare package, regulation promotion of staff and continuous learning process platforms to improve the performance of the academic staff.*

**Keywords:** Employee recognition, Employee engagement, Job satisfaction, attitude to work, Motivation

### INTRODUCTION

Employee motivation remains a critical determinant of organizational performance in contemporary management discourse. As organizations navigate the complexities of an increasingly competitive global economy, the ability to attract, retain, and optimize human capital has become a fundamental priority. Motivation, which influences employee engagement, job satisfaction, and productivity, is widely acknowledged as a significant factor shaping organizational outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Scholars have

long debated the mechanisms through which motivation affects performance, with diverse theoretical perspectives and empirical findings offering varying insights. While some studies affirm the positive impact of motivation on productivity, others argue that its effect is context-dependent and influenced by factors such as industry dynamics, organizational culture, and economic conditions (Pinder, 2019).

Most organizations are preoccupied with what should be done to attain continuous high levels of profitability rather than on the needs and expectations of the work force. Therefore, the issue of sufficient employee motivation stems from the numerous attempts by management practitioners to find the most effective way to manage staff in order to achieve an organization's goal or mission with the least amount of material and human resources available to an organization. As a result, many management practitioners' theoretical ideas, tenets, and methods have changed to meet these problems.

For any commercial organization to enjoy economic success, worker's welfare must be taken seriously because without a dedicated workforce an organization can crumble. The average worker's monthly take-home pay in Nigeria is \$50, which is a poor incentive structure. Employees must be sufficiently motivated to contribute to both their company and society as a whole. Therefore, it is clear that the impact of sufficient motivation on employees' performance is relevant to managerial functions and activities that try to focus the workforce's productive effort on accomplishing organizational goals. This is confirmed by the earlier study of Cole (2006) who argued that management strives to create and maintain an environment that is conducive to the performance of individuals who are working together in groups towards the accomplishment of pre-selected objective. He further asserts that workers in Organisations; work in-groups and group dynamics often result in the conflict of goals between individuals and their groups.

Job satisfaction levels in Nigeria are generally low, attributed to factors such as poor working conditions, job insecurity, and inadequate professional development opportunities (Adebayo, 2022). Empirical studies have found a positive correlation between job satisfaction and performance in Nigerian organizations, reinforcing global findings on the subject (Oladapo & Oni, 2021). However, the extent to which job satisfaction mediates the relationship between motivation and performance remains underexplored in the Nigerian context. It is in the light of the above this study sought to examine the effect of employee motivation on organizational performance in some selected Universities in North-Central Nigeria.

The following research questions were formulated for the study:

- i. To what extent does employee recognition affect job satisfaction of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent does employee engagement affect attitude to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria?

The main objective of the study is to investigate the effect of employee motivation on organizational performance of selected Federal Universities in North Central, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

- i. To examine the extent to which employee recognition affect job satisfaction of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria
- ii. To determine the effect of employee engagement on attitude to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria

The following hypotheses will be formulated for the study

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Employee recognition does not have positive and significant effect on job satisfaction of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Employee engagement does not have positive and significant effect on attitude to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### **Concept of Employee Recognition**

Employee recognition is a fundamental aspect of human resource management that significantly influences job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment. Scholars have defined employee recognition in various ways, emphasizing its role in acknowledging employees' contributions. According to Brun and Dugas (2020), employee recognition refers to the formal and informal ways organizations appreciate employees' efforts, achievements, and behaviors that align with organizational goals. This definition underscores the importance of both tangible and intangible recognition in fostering a positive work environment.

Furthermore, Nelson (2021) describes employee recognition as the timely, meaningful, and authentic acknowledgment of an employee's contributions, which enhances motivation and performance. This perspective highlights the psychological impact of recognition on employee engagement and productivity. Similarly, Saks and Gruman (2020) argue that recognition is a key driver of employee engagement, as it reinforces desired behaviors and creates a culture of appreciation. Their study found that employees who feel recognized exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment to organizational objectives.

### **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is the strength of the mental and emotional connection employees feel toward the organization that they work for, their team. Recognition is important as it allows personnel zoom out-reminding them why their paintings topics and the way they make a difference within the bigger photo. Ultimately, making them sense greater linked and happy with their work. Employee popularity in the place of work needs to be a critical a part of a corporation's culture. In now daisy's paintings surroundings, the groups with the most glad and engaged personnel are those which have the nice training programs and properly-professional personnel. However, even the exceptional employees cannot carry out well while they may be no longer inspired enough. Most of worker's motivation comes from getting regarded by their management. This manner that acknowledging the link among employee recognition and powerful management is prime on the subject of fulfillment (Brenner, 2014).

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction, also known as employee satisfaction, refers to the level of contentment or fulfillment that workers experience in their jobs. It encompasses various aspects, including overall job satisfaction, as well as satisfaction with specific facets of the job such as the nature of work, supervision, communication, recognition, and promotion opportunities. Job satisfaction can be measured through cognitive (evaluative), affective (emotional), and behavioral components, which capture individuals' thoughts, feelings, and actions related to their job.

Job satisfaction is influenced by a variety of factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic factors are directly related to the job itself and include aspects such as the nature of the work, autonomy, responsibility, creativity, and opportunities for personal growth and skill utilization. These factors have a strong impact on employees' sense of success and fulfillment in their work (Vriti and Siddharth, 2023)

**Attitude to Work**

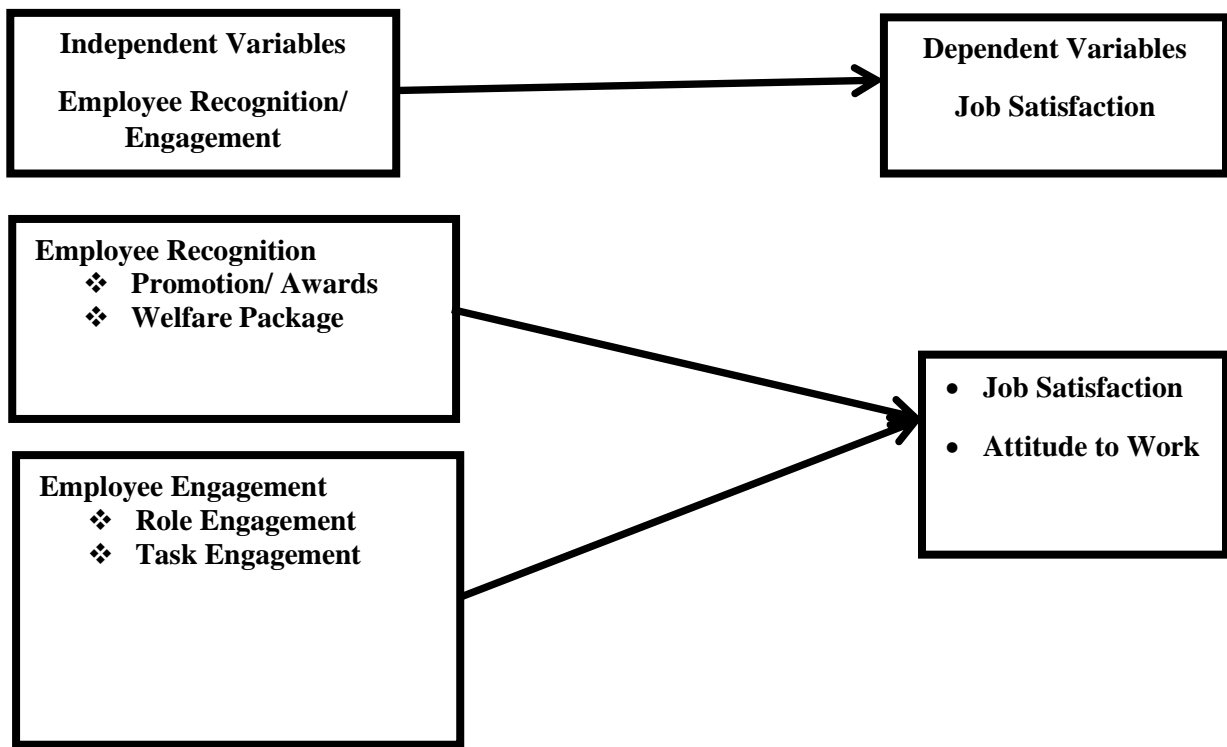
Attitude is important variable in human behavior which helps in a person’s personality traits i.e. optimistic or pessimistic, negative or positive etc, this all depend on the level of motivation. According to Hogg (2017), attitude is a negative or positive evaluation of an object which influences human’s behavior towards that object”.

In today's dynamic job market, where skilled and talented individuals have more opportunities to find better positions elsewhere, attitudes toward jobs, including job satisfaction, can have predictive value for a variety of employee behaviors. For instance, job satisfaction can influence absenteeism and resignation rates, as dissatisfied employees are more likely to miss work and may even consider leaving the organization.

**Conceptual Model**

The relationship between the dependent and independent variables is revealed in figure 1 below.

**Conceptual Framework**



Source: Authors’ Conceptualization, (2025)

**Theoretical Review**

**Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory**

Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, was developed by Frederick Herzberg in 1959. Motivators and hygiene factors are the two categories into which this theory divides job factors in order to explain workplace motivation (Herzberg, 1959). Employee motivation is increased and job satisfaction is increased by motivators like career advancement, meaningful work, and recognition. Hygiene

considerations, including wage, job security, and working environment, may not always encourage employees but can contribute to unhappiness if lacking (Herzberg et al., 1959).

### **Implication to the Study**

The assumptions of the theory include job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not on the same continuum but are independent, employees are motivated by intrinsic factors that drive performance rather than extrinsic rewards alone, and improving hygiene factors may prevent dissatisfaction but will not necessarily lead to long-term motivation (Herzberg, 1966). Organizations aiming to improve performance must focus on both motivation-enhancing factors and maintaining proper hygiene conditions to retain employees and enhance their job commitment (Malik & Naeem, 2013).

Despite its significance, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory has several limitations. First, it assumes that all employees respond to motivators and hygiene factors in the same way, ignoring individual differences in work preferences (Sachau, 2007). Second, it oversimplifies job satisfaction, failing to account for situations where financial incentives and extrinsic factors can strongly influence motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2019). Third, the theory's reliance on self-reported data may lead to biased findings, as employees may attribute satisfaction to their efforts while blaming dissatisfaction on external factors (Herzberg, 1974). Additionally, the theory does not fully consider the impact of cultural and industry differences on workplace motivation (Islam & Ali, 2013).

### **Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory (SET) was developed by George Homans in 1958 and later expanded by Peter Blau in 1964. The theory posits that social interactions and relationships are formed based on a cost-benefit analysis, where individuals seek to maximize rewards while minimizing costs (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964). It emphasizes reciprocity, suggesting that people engage in exchanges when they perceive that the benefits outweigh the sacrifices. Within the context of employee motivation and organizational performance, SET explains how employees' commitment, satisfaction, and productivity are influenced by the perceived fairness of rewards, recognition, and incentives provided by their organization (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

### **Implication to the Study**

The assumptions of SET include human relationships are guided by self-interest, where individuals seek to maximize their benefits, reciprocity is a fundamental principle, meaning employees perform better when they feel valued and rewarded, social exchanges are voluntary, with individuals choosing to engage based on perceived fairness and trust and commitment develop when exchanges are mutually beneficial over time (Blau, 1964; Cook et al., 2013). This theory provides a strong foundation for understanding how organizations can use reward systems and motivation strategies to improve employee retention, engagement, and overall productivity (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

### **Theory Adopted for the Study**

Social Exchange Theory was adopted for this study because when employees believe they are adequately compensated whether through financial incentives, recognition, job satisfaction, or career development opportunities they are more likely to be motivated, which enhances organizational performance

### **Empirical Review**

Akinwale and George (2020) conducted a study on reward systems and organizational performance in the manufacturing industry in South-South Nigeria. The research adopted a survey design, collecting primary

data from 257 management staff across five selected manufacturing firms using structured questionnaires. Multiple regression analysis revealed that both financial and non-financial rewards, including employee recognition, have a significant positive effect on organizational performance. The study concluded that a well-implemented reward system enhances employee performance and recommended that manufacturing firms adopt comprehensive reward strategies encompassing both financial incentives and recognition programs. Masri and Suliman (2019) examined this relationship within research institutions in Qatar. The study utilized a survey research design, collecting primary data from 180 full-time employees through online personalized questionnaires. Multiple regression analysis revealed that both talent management and employee recognition significantly affect employee performance, contributing to organizational success and positioning. The study concluded that implementing effective recognition programs enhances employee performance and recommended that organizations develop structured recognition systems to foster employee engagement and productivity.

Nwokocha (2016) investigated the influence of employee recognition on organizational performance at Nairobi Coca-Cola Bottlers Limited. The study employed a descriptive survey design, gathering primary data through structured questionnaires administered to employees. Correlation analysis indicated a positive and significant relationship between employee recognition and organizational performance. The study concluded that recognizing employees' contributions leads to higher productivity and recommended that organizations implement regular recognition programs to motivate employees and enhance performance.

Kosgey and Sakataka (2015) explored the impact of employee recognition and empowerment on organizational performance in the insurance sector in Kenya. The study utilized a descriptive research design, collecting primary data through questionnaires distributed to employees in selected insurance companies. Regression analysis indicated that both recognition and empowerment positively and significantly influence organizational performance. The study concluded that recognizing and empowering employees leads to improved performance and recommended that insurance companies implement policies that promote employee recognition and empowerment to achieve organizational goals.

## METHODOLOGY

A cross-sectional analysis was conducted, as the data were collected at a specific point in time.

The population of this study comprises of 18,951 academic staff of selected Universities in North-Central, Nigeria which was collected from the senior establishment office in the various universities.

**Table 3.1 Federal Universities in North Central and Their Current Staff Population**

S/N	UNIVERSITIES	NUMBER OF ACADEMIC STAFF
i.	University of Ilorin (UNILORIN)	3,023
ii.	University of Jos (UNIJOS)	2,954
iii.	Federal University, Lafia	1,567
iv.	Federal University, Lokoja	1785

v.	Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi	2,345
vi.	University of Abuja	2,034
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>13,708</b>

Source: Researcher’s field work, 2025

Conclusions can only be drawn if the sample size is a true representative of the population to which generalization can be made. In choosing the sample size and securing representative responses, this study adopted Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula stated below:

$$S = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)}$$

S = Required sample size

X<sup>2</sup> = The table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841)

N = The population size

P = The population proportion (assume to be .50 since this would provide the maximum sample size

D = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (.05)

Thus, a population of 907 has a sample size of

$$S = \frac{3.841 \times 13,708 \times 0.50 (1-0.50)}{0.0025 (13,708 -1) + 3.841 \times 0.50 (1 - 0.50)}$$

$$S = \frac{2636.214 \times 0.50}{34.2675 + 0.96025}$$

Thus, a total three hundred and seventy-Seven (374) academic staff were used across the selected Federal Universities in North Central.

$$S = \frac{13163.107}{35.22775}$$

**Allocation of Copies of Questionnaire to various selected Federal Universities**

S/N	Private Hospitals	Academic Staff Population	Allocation of Questionnaire
1	University of Ilorin	3,023	3,023/13,708 x 374

	(UNILORIN)		= <b>82</b>
2	University of Jos (UNIJOS)	2,954	2,954/13,708 x 374 = <b>81</b>
3	Federal University, Lafia	1,567	1,567/13,708 x 374 = <b>43</b>
4	Federal University, Lokoja	1785	1,785/13,708 x 374 = <b>49</b>
5	Federal University of Agriculture, Makurdi	2,345	2,345/13,708 x 374 = <b>64</b>
6	University of Abuja	2,034	2,034/13,708 x 374 = <b>55</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13,708</b>	<b>374</b>

**Source: Author’s Computation, 2025**

The multi-staged sampling technique which involves purposive sampling and simple random sampling in selecting the respondents. The primary data was sourced through a well-structured copies of questionnaire that were administered to the respective respondents. The multiple regression analysis was used because the study examined the effect employee motivation on organizational performance

**Model Specifications**

**Model for Hypothesis 1**

Regression Analysis

The mathematical model that describes how employee recognition affect Employee morale to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria is given in equation 1 below:

$$EM = f(ER) \dots\dots\dots$$

Given that  $ER = PAA + WP$

Therefore,

$$PP = \beta_0 + \beta_1PAA_i + \beta_2WP_i + \mu_i \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

Where:

ER is Employee Recognition

PA is Promotion and Awards

WP is Welfare Package

$\beta_1 - 2$  are the coefficient values of Promotion/Awards, and Welfare Package respectively.

**Model for Hypothesis 2**

**Regression Analysis**

The mathematical model that describes the effect of employee engagement on attitude to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria is given in equation 3 below:

$$AW = f(EE) \dots\dots\dots$$

Given that  $EE = RE + TE$

Therefore,

$$AW = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RE_i + \beta_2 TE + \mu_i \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

Where:

EE is Employee Engagement

AW is Attitude to Work

RE is Role Engagement

TE is Task Engagement

$\beta_1 - 2$  are the coefficient values of Role engagement and Task engagement respectively

**Inferential Analysis**

Multiple regression analysis is used to examine the objectives of this study.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Out of 374 copies of questionnaire distributed across the selected Universities, 250 copies were duly filled and returned for the study.

**Effect of employee recognition on Job Satisfaction of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria**

Table 1: Model Summary for the Effect of Employee Recognition on Job Satisfaction

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.716 <sup>a</sup>	.651	.631	.4322012112365

a. Predictors: (Constant), Performance Based Promotion/Awards, Welfare package

**Source: Author’s Computations, (2025)**

The model summary of the relationship between employee recognition and work morale is shown in Table 1, where the R-square is 0.651. This suggests that employee recognition accounts for approximately 65.1% of the variation in work morale at a subset of Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria, with the remaining 34.9% being explained by other factors not included in the model.

Table 2: ANOVA for the Effect of Employee Recognition on Morale to Work

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	27.497	2	6.874	361.800	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	44.831	240	.187		
	Total	72.328	244			

a. Dependent Variable: Morale to work  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Performance Based Promotion/Awards, Welfare package

**Source: Author’s Computations, 2025**

Additionally, the model's analysis of variance (ANOVA) is shown in table 2. The stated F-statistic is significant, suggesting that the model is fit, as indicated by the F-statistic's value of 361.800 and probability value of 0.000. This suggests the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients for the Effect of Employee Recognition on Morale to Work

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>					
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	.794	.313		2.540	.012
	Performance Based Promotion/Awards	.310	.076	.281	4.101	.000
	Welfare package	.259	.074	.244	3.522	.001
a. Dependent Variable: Morale to work						

**Source: Author’s Computations, 2025**

Again table 3 presents the coefficients of the effect of Employee Recognition on Morale to Work, the result revealed that Performance Based Promotion/Awards has an significant coefficient 0.310 and Welfare package has a significant coefficient of 0.259.

Performance Based Promotion/Awards and Welfare package all have positive coefficients, signifying that they all have positive effect on Morale to work in the selected Universities in North central. This implies that an increase in each of these variables of employee recognition will lead to increase in morale to work in the selected Universities.

Specifically, a point increase in Performance Based Promotion/Awards will lead to 0.310 points increase in morale to work in the selected Universities. Similarly, a point increase in Welfare package will lead to 0.259 points increase in morale to work in the selected Universities.

**The Effect of Employee Engagement on Attitude to Work of Selected Federal Universities in North Central, Nigeria.**

Table 4 Model Summary for the Effect of Employee Engagement on Attitude to Work

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.818 <sup>a</sup>	.736	.708	.494531480606073
a. Predictors: (Constant), role engagement, task engagement				

**Source: Author’s Computations, 2025**

The model overview of how employee involvement affects work attitude is shown in Table 4 R-squared is 0.736, according to the table. This suggests that 73.6% of the variation in the chosen Federal Universities' attitudes toward work can be explained by employee engagement, with other characteristics not included in the model accounting for the remaining 26.4%.

Table 5: ANOVA for the Effect of Employee Engagement on Attitude to Work

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	28.720	2	14.360	29.358	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	58.450	239	.245		
	Total	87.170	243			
a. Dependent Variable: Attitude to Work						
b. Predictors: (Constant), role engagement, task engagement						

**Source: Author’s Computations, 2025**

The model's analysis of variance (ANOVA) is shown in Table 5. The given F-statistic is significant, suggesting that the entire model is fit, as indicated by the F-statistic's value of 29.358 and probability value of 0.000. This suggests the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Table 6: Regression Coefficient for the Effect of Employee Engagement on Attitude to Work

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.879	.330		2.661	.008
	Role Engagement	.484	.074	.404	6.571	.000
	Task Engagement	.187	.061	.194	3.054	.003

**Source: Author's Computations, 2025**

Table 6 presents the coefficients of the effect of Employee Engagement on Attitude to Work, the result revealed that role engagement and task engagement have significant coefficients (0.484 and 0.187). Role engagement and task engagement have significant coefficients because their p-values of 0.000 and 0.003 are lower than 0.05 significance level

Role engagement and task engagement have positive coefficients, signifying that they both have positive effect on attitude to work. This implies that an increase in each of these variables will lead to increase in attitude to work in selected Federal Universities in North Central, Nigeria.

Specifically, a point increase in Role engagement will lead to 0.484 points increase in attitude to work in selected Federal Universities. Similarly, a point increase in task engagement will lead to 0.187 points increase in attitude to work in selected Federal Universities.

**Discussion of Findings**

The study investigated the effect of Employee recognition and engagement on job satisfaction of selected Federal Universities in North Central, Nigeria. Discussion was presented in line with the objectives and the hypotheses of the study.

The first finding established the significance of employee recognition affect morale to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. The hypothesis proved that there is a significant effect between employee recognition affect morale to work. In addition, this implies that the null hypothesis was rejected. The independent variables (performance based promotion/awards and welfare package variables were all found to have a significant effect on employee morale to work. Therefore, since employee recognition has a significant effect on employee morale to work, it then proves the viability of the Social Exchange Theory. This theory was adopted because the theory posits that social interactions are driven by reciprocal exchanges, where individuals assess the costs and benefits of their relationships. In an organizational context, employees expect fair treatment, recognition, and incentives in exchange for their commitment and productivity. When organizations provide adequate motivation, employees respond with increased effort, job satisfaction, and improved performance. This finding is in consistence with Bradler et al. (2016) which conducted a field experiment to assess the impact of employee recognition on performance in a German manufacturing company. The findings revealed that public employee recognition led to a significant increase in subsequent performance, with recognized employees exhibiting a 5.2% improvement compared to those who were not

recognized. The study also revealed that public recognition serves as an effective motivational tool and recommended that organizations incorporate regular recognition practices to boost employee performance. The second finding established the significance of employee engagement and attitude to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. The hypothesis proved that there is a significant effect between employee engagement and attitude to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. In addition, this implies that the null hypothesis was rejected. The improvement of employees' attitudes toward their jobs at a few Federal Universities in North-Central Nigeria is mostly dependent on employee engagement. The two most significant factors in enhancing employees' attitudes toward their jobs are role and task engagement. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT), created by Edward and Ryan in 1985, is supported by these findings. The theory posits that individuals are naturally inclined toward growth, self-improvement, and engagement in activities that fulfill their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Employees feel a sense of autonomy (control over their work), competence (confidence in their skills), and relatedness (a sense of belonging in the workplace). They are more likely to be engaged and perform at higher levels (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Organizations that foster these conditions enhance job satisfaction and employee commitment, leading to improved performance outcomes. This finding is in agreement with the work of Masri and Suliman (2019) which posited that employee engagement significantly affect employee performance within research institutions in Qatar. The study revealed that organizations that strategically, profitably and tactically engage their staff in terms of role and task engagement will achieve the stated objectives quickly than others.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings highlighted above, this study makes the following conclusion:

Employee recognition has a significant effect on job satisfaction in selected Federal Universities in North Central, Nigeria. In particular, the improvement in the performance-based promotion/awards and superb welfare package are mainly responsible for the staff job satisfaction. According to the report, performance-based promotions and rewards are a guaranteed method to boost employee motivation and engagement. They also foster a strong sense of community and make workers feel valued. Performance-based awards are incentives given to employees based on their contributions to the organization at work, not how long they have worked there. Bonuses, pay raises, and stock options are just a few examples of performance-based incentives.

Furthermore, employee engagement can increase attitude to work of selected Federal Universities in North-Central, Nigeria. In particular, employee engagement can be critical to a University's success, given its clear links to job satisfaction and employee morale. Role engagement, task engagement and communication are critical parts of creating and maintaining employee engagement. Engaged employees are more likely to be productive, higher attitude to work and performing.

The study's conclusions led to the following suggestions:

- i) Welfare benefits and performance-based promotions have been viewed as ways to raise university employees' spirits. Rewards must be closely related to the intended behavior in order to have the greatest effect on employee performance. Reward specific outcomes with cash, non-monetary, recognition, and praise. In order to incentivize academic personnel to perform at their best going forward, the federal government, through the ministry of education and the National

- University Commission, should make sure that they understand the relationship between their compensation and performance.
- ii) Opportunities for ongoing education should be provided by the federal government through the National University Commission throughout all university systems. To keep university employees interested and changing, they should support professional development. Encourage a Recognition Culture: Pay employees their earned academic allowance and recognize their accomplishments through effective leadership as a regular way to thank them for their hard work.

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