

# Reward Systems and Employee Satisfaction: Insights from A Questionnaire-Based Study in New York

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**Abstract.** Employee satisfaction plays a critical role in organizational success, influencing productivity, engagement, and retention. While prior studies have examined broad factors such as motivation and compensation, limited research has explored how demographic factors, particularly age and department, affect perceptions of specific reward systems. This study addressed that by investigating how employees evaluate rewards such as paid time off (PTO), complimentary lunch, and company-branded goods, and whether these evaluations vary by age or departmental affiliation. Quantitative data were collected from 120 employees at a New York City home health agency using a self-administered questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Respondents rated five reward-related items using a five-point Likert scale. ANOVA and pairwise comparisons were conducted to assess group differences. Results showed a statistically significant difference in perceptions of PTO across age groups, with older employees reporting lower agreement than younger cohorts. No significant differences were observed across departments or for other reward types. These findings suggest that age plays a larger role than department in shaping reward perceptions. The study underscored the importance of developing reward strategies that consider age. Future research should investigate factors such as job position and marital status to better understand what influences employee satisfaction.

**Keywords:** Employee satisfaction; New York; Questionnaire-based study.

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, human resource management has become increasingly important to the success of organizations [1]. A key part of this is understanding and measuring employee satisfaction, which plays a major role in effective employee management, improving productivity, and employee retention [2]. Employee satisfaction has been identified as a fundamental driver of internal stability, influencing factors such as employee morale, workplace relationships, and long-term commitment. Research has shown that organizations with dissatisfied employees experience reduced levels of customer loyalty and service quality [3]. Recognizing this, many companies are starting to move beyond focusing only on financial results and are now working to create more supportive and engaging work environments [4]. High levels of employee satisfaction are now seen as essential to maintaining productivity, adaptability, and innovation [5]. Moreover, satisfied employees are more likely to exhibit higher levels of job engagement and make decisions that align with the organization's goals [6]. This creates a cycle where positive workplace practices lead to greater employee commitment, thereby improving overall organizational performance.

Several recent studies have explored the complex relationship between employee satisfaction and organizational outcomes. Ali and Anwar [7] found that monetary compensation had a significant impact on job satisfaction and that communication between employees and managers plays an essential role in motivation. The study highlighted how work culture and workplace relationships shape how employees perceive their jobs and rewards. In another study, Sari [8] elucidated that employee motivation and competence were key factors in job satisfaction, while organizational culture had no significant impact. Her findings confirmed that higher job satisfaction leads to improved employee performance, demonstrating the value of a greater organizational focus on motivation and skill development. Davies et al. [9] studied the role of employer brand image in shaping employee satisfaction and engagement. The findings revealed that employee engagement is influenced by employees' perceptions of their employer's warmth and competence. Sypniewska et al.

[10] also showed that workplace well-being, employee development, and retention are positively linked to job engagement and satisfaction. The study corroborated the concept that prioritizing employee well-being is important for long-term organizational success.

Nguyen [11] took a broader approach by conducting a literature review along with gathering expert feedback to identify what motivates or discourages employees. His findings suggested that clear compensation procedures, leadership support, and training opportunities can enhance employee motivation and satisfaction, thereby aiding organizational growth. Son and Kim [12], applying the service profit chain model to South Korea's coffee shop industry, demonstrated a strong interconnection between employee satisfaction and external customer satisfaction. Their path analysis showed that job satisfaction positively influenced customer-perceived value and, ultimately, customer satisfaction, highlighting the ripple effects of a healthy internal service climate. Mishra et al. [13] contributed to this growing body of knowledge by applying structural equation modeling within the banking sector. Their results confirmed a significant relationship between employee satisfaction and performance while also offering practical guidance for managers to foster engagement and long-term commitment.

Collectively, previous studies suggest that employee satisfaction is critically linked to performance, motivation, customer satisfaction, and overall organizational success. However, despite the wealth of research examining general factors such as motivation, leadership, and compensation, limited research has examined how demographic factors, such as an employee's age or department, specifically influence how different types of rewards are perceived and how these perceptions, in turn, affect satisfaction. This represents a critical gap in the literature, especially considering the increasingly diverse composition of today's workforce.

To address this gap, the current study investigated how employees perceive various types of rewards, such as paid time off (PTO), complimentary lunch, and company-branded goods, and whether these perceptions vary based on age and departmental affiliation. Using quantitative survey data collected from a home health agency in New York City, the study explored which types of rewards employees highly value and how different demographic groups respond to each. The research was prompted by the need to provide employers with evidence-based insights into how different segments of the workforce evaluate reward systems.

By recognizing differences in preferences, organizations can implement more effective reward programs and make informed decisions. In high-cost cities like New York City, where younger employees may experience greater financial stress, identifying effective compensation that meets their needs is crucial. This study offers practical insights and expands on the value of tailoring rewards to fit the unique needs of a diverse workforce, ultimately contributing to greater employee satisfaction.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Data Collections**

This study was conducted with employees from a home health agency located in New York City. A total of 120 participants took part in the research. The majority of respondents were of Asian descent and resided permanently within the Tri-State Area (New York, New Jersey, Connecticut) of the United States. A short, self-administered questionnaire was created using Google Forms to allow for efficient distribution and ease of completion. The form was circulated electronically, ensuring accessibility across departments and minimizing barriers to participation. All 120 respondents completed the survey in full, resulting in a 100% valid response rate. The participants represented a broad range of departments and age groups, enabling the study to examine variations in reward perception and satisfaction across demographic lines.

## 2.2. Questionnaire design and structure

The questionnaire was designed to assess employee perceptions of various reward-related practices and their relationship to overall job satisfaction. It comprised five statements across different dimensions of compensation and organizational values. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponded to 'Strongly Disagree' and 5 to 'Strongly Agree.' This approach allowed for the quantification of subjective perceptions and facilitated statistical comparison. The survey included items that measured the perceived impact of rewards on satisfaction, such as paid time off (PTO), complimentary lunches, company-branded gifts, and general organizational commitment to employee-wellbeing. These dimensions were selected based on their relevance to both tangible and intangible reward systems and their potential to influence employee satisfaction. Table 1 provides a summary of the questionnaire structure and associated evaluation items, categorized by reward type.

**Table 1.** Reward Systems and Employee Satisfaction Questionnaire

Evaluation dimensions	Evaluation items
Rewards	Rewards positively affect employee satisfaction.
Pay and benefits	Paid Time Off (PTO) is a good form of compensation.
	Complimentary lunch on weekends and holidays is a good reward.
	Company branded goods are good gifts to receive from the company.
Company Value	The company believes employee satisfaction is important.

## 2.3. Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using MATLAB. For each of the five survey items, the mean agreement level was calculated across the four age categories and across each department. This analysis provided an initial understanding of how perceptions varied by demographic group. Inferential analysis was then performed to determine the statistical significance of these differences. Specifically, a one-way ANOVA was conducted for each item, comparing means across age groups and departments independently. The use of ANOVA was appropriate for this study, as it allowed for the examination of mean differences across multiple groups within a single factor. The analysis focused on identifying whether employee perceptions of rewards differed significantly based on age or department affiliation.

To examine whether employee perceptions of rewards varied across demographic categories, the study formulated specific statistical hypotheses targeting key variables, including age and department. Specifically, hypotheses were established as follows: for age, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) stated that there is no significant difference in questionnaire responses across age groups, while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) posited that there is a significant difference in responses among these groups. Similarly, for the department, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) maintained that no significant difference exists in questionnaire responses across departments, whereas the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) proposed that such differences are indeed present. These assumptions were assessed using analysis of variance (ANOVA), and a significance level of 0.05 was adopted to determine the presence of meaningful variation in response patterns across the demographic categories.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

A total of 120 employees participated in the survey. The most represented age group was 30-39 years, accounting for 40.0% of respondents, while those aged 50 and older comprised only 11.7%. Departmentally, the 'Other' category had the highest representation at 45.8%, while Billing was least represented at 0.8% (Table 2).

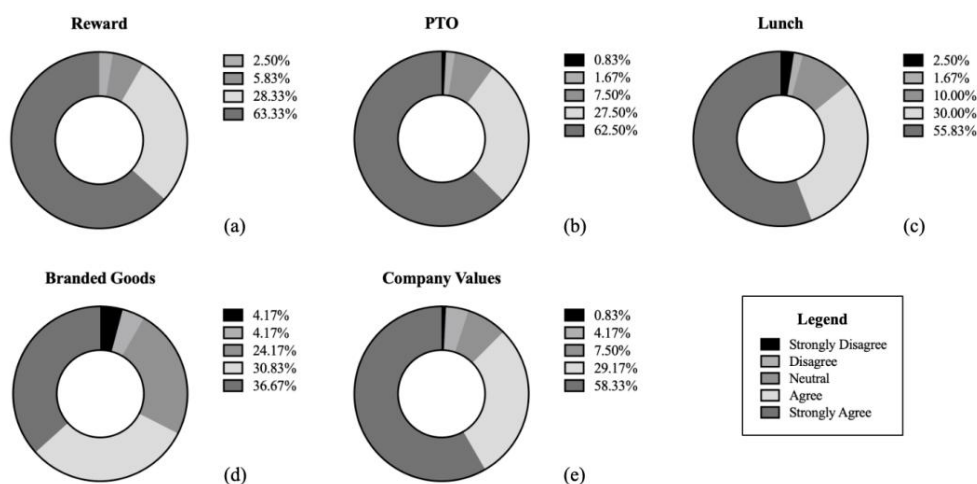
**Table 2.** Demographic Distribution of Respondents

	Variable	Sample Number	Percentage (%)
Age	20-29	29	24.2
	30-39	48	40
	40-49	29	24.2
	50 and older	14	11.7
Department	HR	17	14.2
	Accounting	10	8.3
	Billing	1	0.8
	Customer Service	23	19.2
	Marketing	11	9.2
	IT	3	2.5
	Other	55	45.8

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of employee responses to five survey items presented as pie charts reflecting the percentage of each response category, ranging from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'. The majority of respondents expressed strong agreement with the statement regarding overall reward perception (Figure 1a), with 68.33% selecting 'Strongly Agree' and an additional 28.33% selecting 'Agree', indicating a highly favorable perception. Similarly, the paid time off (PTO) statement (Figure 1b) also received strong positive responses, with 62.50% selecting 'Strongly Agree' and 27.50% selecting 'Agree'.

In contrast, responses to the statement regarding company-branded goods as rewards (Figure 1d) were more varied. Only 36.67% selected 'Strongly Agree', the lowest among all items, and 4.17% selected 'Strongly Disagree', the highest for that response category across all questions, suggesting lower enthusiasm for branded goods as meaningful rewards. Notably, branded goods were the only item for which fewer than half of respondents selected 'Strongly Agree', in contrast to the other items where this response exceeded 50%.

The statement on complimentary lunch (Figure 1c) and the company's emphasis on employee satisfaction (Figure 1e) also showed strong positive sentiment, with 55.83% and 58.33% of respondents, respectively, selecting 'Strongly Agree.' However, a closer observation of Figure 1a reveals that the reward perception item had the most uniformly positive distribution, with no responses in the 'Strongly Disagree' category and only 2.50% in 'Disagree.' Furthermore, across all items, approximately 30% of respondents selected 'Agree,' and every question except reward perception elicited at least one 'Strongly Disagree' response.



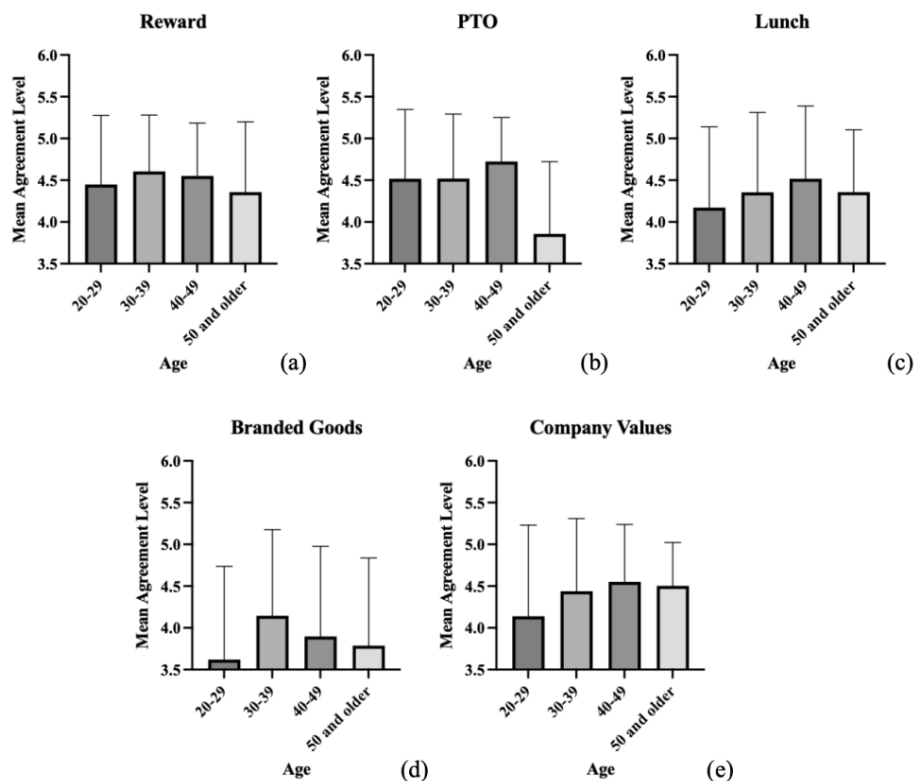
**Fig. 1** Pie charts displaying percentage distributions of responses to each survey item

Reward perception, (b) Paid time off (PTO), (c) Complimentary lunch, (d) Company-branded goods, (e) Company values. Response options range from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree'.

### 3.2. Age-Based Differences in Reward Perceptions

Figure 2 presents the mean agreement levels and associated standard deviations for each reward-related survey item across four age groups. Across most items, respondents generally showed high levels of agreement, with mean values typically above 4.0. Notably, in Figure 2b, the item regarding paid time off (PTO) reveals a marked drop in agreement among respondents aged 50 and older, whose mean agreement level is approximately 3.8, compared to mean agreement levels near 4.5 for the younger age groups. This difference was statistically significant, as indicated by the ANOVA results discussed previously.

The remaining items did not show notable differences in mean agreement levels across age groups. In particular, Figure 2d shows that the item on company-branded goods elicited the overall lowest mean agreement levels across all groups, with scores ranging from approximately 3.6 to 4.1. Additionally, the error bars in multiple figures, particularly Figures 2c and 2d, suggest greater variability in responses for items such as complimentary lunch and branded goods, indicating less consensus among respondents on those reward types.



**Fig. 2** Bar graphs displaying mean agreement levels and standard deviations for each reward-related survey item across four age groups.

(a) Reward perception, (b) Paid time off, (c) Complimentary lunch, (d) Company-branded goods, and (e) Company values. Error bars indicate standard deviation.

Given the significant result for the PTO item, pairwise comparisons were conducted to further investigate differences in agreement levels across age groups. These analyses revealed that the age group '50 and older' differed significantly from all three younger groups—'20-29' ( $p=0.03775$ ), '30-39' ( $p=0.02128$ ), and '40-49' ( $p=0.00293$ )—suggesting that older employees perceive the PTO policy more favorably or differently than their younger counterparts (Table 3). In contrast, comparisons among the younger age groups (20-29, 30-39, and 40-49) yielded non-significant  $p$ -values (all  $>0.65$ ), indicating relatively homogeneous responses within those cohorts. These findings reflect a clear divergence in perception that becomes more apparent when comparing the oldest group to the others,

warranting further exploration into how age-related factors influence attitudes toward time-off policies.

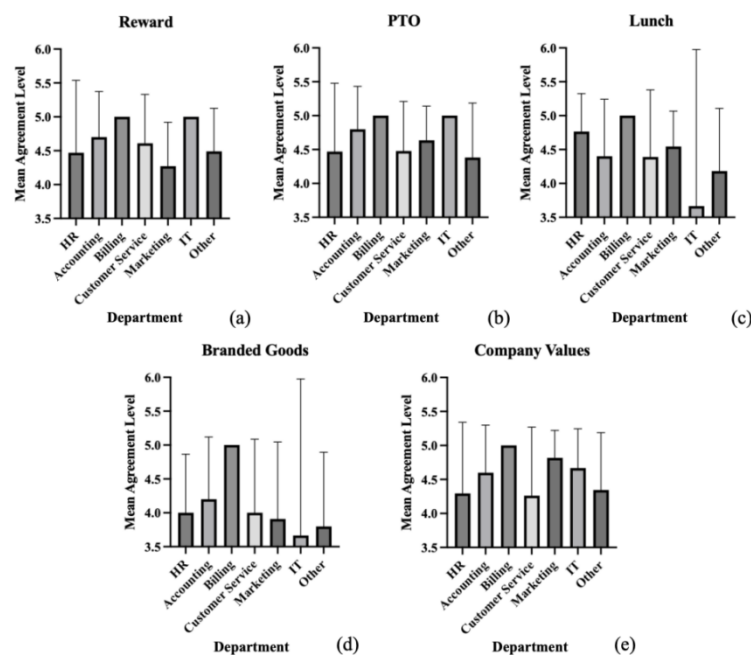
Based on the ANOVA results and subsequent pairwise comparisons, the null hypothesis, that there are no significant differences in questionnaire responses across age groups, was rejected. The significant differences identified, particularly between the '50 and older' group and the younger cohorts, provide sufficient evidence to support the alternative hypothesis: that perceptions of PTO vary significantly by age group.

**Table 3.** Pairwise Comparison of Agreement Levels for the PTO Statement Across Age Groups

Group A	Group B	P-Value
20-29	30-39	1
20-29	40-49	0.71762
20-29	50 and older	0.03775
30-39	40-49	0.65493
30-39	50 and older	0.02128
40-49	50 and older	0.00293

### 3.3. Departmental Variation in Reward Perception

Figure 3 displays the mean agreement levels and standard deviations for each reward-related survey item across departments. As shown in Figure 3a and 3b, responses to the items on reward perception and paid time off were relatively consistent across departments, with only slight variations observed in departments such as Customer Service and Marketing. However, Figure 3c reveals a notable dip in mean agreement for the IT department regarding complimentary lunch, which also displayed a markedly high standard deviation of approximately 2.3, substantially greater than that of any other department. Figure 3d shows that the branded goods item received the lowest mean agreement levels overall, echoing patterns seen in previous analyses. Meanwhile, the Customer Service department demonstrated comparatively lower mean agreement levels across nearly all items (Figure 3), whereas departments such as Accounting, Marketing, and Billing generally reported higher agreement, often close to or at the maximum rating of 5. These findings suggest departmental variability, particularly in perceptions of tangible versus intangible rewards.



**Fig. 3** Bar graphs showing mean agreement levels and standard deviations across departments for each reward-related survey item.

(a) Reward perception, (b) Paid time off, (c) Complimentary lunch, (d) Company-branded goods, and (e) Company values. Error bars indicate standard deviation.

## 4. Discussion

To examine whether age or department influenced responses to each reward-related question, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The results revealed that age had a statistically significant effect on responses to the paid time off item ( $p=0.0062$ ), indicating that agreement levels for this question varied meaningfully across age groups. This suggests that perceptions of PTO are not uniform across ages, with older employees expressing notably different views compared to younger cohorts. In contrast, no other question showed a statistically significant difference by age (all  $p$ -values  $> 0.20$ ), suggesting that age did not meaningfully influence responses to the other four items.

Furthermore, no significant differences in response patterns were found across departments for any question (all  $p$ -values  $> 0.22$ ), indicating that department affiliation did not substantially impact how participants evaluated rewards (Table 4). Thus, age emerged as a more relevant demographic factor than department in shaping perceptions of PTO.

The null hypothesis for age was rejected for the PTO item, providing evidence in support of the alternative hypothesis: that age significantly affects agreement levels for this question. However, for all department-related comparisons, the null hypothesis was retained, as there was insufficient evidence to suggest departmental differences in response patterns.

**Table 4.** ANOVA P-values by Question and Demographic Group

	1	2	3	4	5
Age	0.6413	0.0062	0.5633	0.2034	0.2812
Department	0.6592	0.5814	0.2280	0.8477	0.5582

Conversely, no significant differences were observed in responses to the other four survey statements across age or department groups. These results suggest that perceptions of paid time off (PTO) as a form of compensation are uniquely influenced by age. Prior research by Kollmann et al. [14] indicated that younger employees experienced decreased job satisfaction when they feel under-rewarded monetarily, whereas older employees' satisfaction appears less affected by such compensation discrepancies. Wisse et. al [15] similarly found that older employees demonstrate higher levels of corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is positively linked to job satisfaction. This could explain the weaker support for PTO among older workers, who may equate job satisfaction with being present and contributing to their organization rather than taking time off. Raab [16] further supports this interpretation, finding that older workers derive satisfaction more from professional development, recognition, and support than from salary or monetary benefits.

Younger employees, particularly those facing high living expenses in areas like New York City, may prioritize financial benefits like PTO more due to their life stage and financial constraints. Many have not yet accumulated significant savings and may therefore place greater value on any form of compensation, including paid time away from work. In contrast, older employees may perceive PTO as an unnecessary reward for time not actively spent contributing to their roles. These generational differences in reward valuation likely reflect broader shifts in workplace expectations and evolving norms around employee well-being and compensation.

Building on this analysis, the lack of significant variation in responses across departments may initially appear inconsistent with prior research, yet it highlights key contextual differences. Davis and Aktürk [17] demonstrated that employee perception of human resources practices (HRP) and satisfaction can vary considerably between departments, suggesting that departmental context may shape how rewards are interpreted. However, in their study, departmental roles were clearly delineated, and HR practices were examined more granularly. In contrast, the present study did not disaggregate HR initiatives in detail, potentially limiting the ability to detect subtle departmental differences in perception. Additionally, Kumar [18] emphasized that departments characterized by

innovative work may require more intrinsic rewards than others, as the nature of job responsibilities can influence how employees assess value in reward systems. Therefore, it is possible that while departmental roles in the current study did differ, the reward types surveyed were not sufficiently tailored to expose these distinctions.

Several limitations may also account for the null results across departments and other demographic categories. Al-Shammari [19] found that an employee's position within the organizational hierarchy significantly influences satisfaction levels. This study did not collect data on job position, which could have introduced unmeasured variability in responses. Similarly, Shin and Park [20] identified marital status as a key factor in how employees assess material rewards. By omitting marital status, the present study may have overlooked a meaningful dimension in understanding reward perception.

## 5. Conclusion

This study explored how employees from a home health agency in New York City perceive different types of rewards and whether these perceptions vary based on age or department affiliation. Through a structured quantitative approach utilizing a self-administered questionnaire and statistical analysis via ANOVA, the findings revealed that employee perceptions of paid time off (PTO) differ significantly across age groups, while responses to other reward types, such as complimentary lunch, company-branded goods, and general reward sentiment, did not exhibit statistically significant differences by age or department.

The most notable finding was the lower level of agreement with the value of PTO among employees aged 50 and older, contrasting with younger employees who rated it more favorably. This age-related divergence supports prior research suggesting that younger employees, especially those living in high-cost urban environments like New York City, place greater value on monetary or flexible compensation due to financial and lifestyle constraints. Conversely, older employees may derive satisfaction more from professional development and contribution than from time off, aligning with broader trends in organizational behavior literature regarding generational differences in motivation and reward preferences.

While no significant departmental variation was observed, this absence may reflect limitations in the reward types surveyed, which may not have been differentiated enough to capture variations across functional roles. Prior studies have shown that departmental context can influence how employees interpret rewards, particularly when tasks are specialized or innovation-driven. However, the present study's generalized reward categories and lack of role-specific analysis may have contributed to the null findings in this area. Several limitations were identified that could inform future research. Key demographic factors such as job position and marital status, both shown in previous studies to significantly impact employee satisfaction, were not accounted for in the survey design. Their exclusion may have limited the scope of insight into the nuances of reward perception. Future research should incorporate these variables to offer a more comprehensive understanding of how personal and professional contexts intersect with employee satisfaction outcomes.

Overall, the study contributes to existing literature by emphasizing the importance of age in shaping employee attitudes toward specific forms of compensation. These insights offer practical value for organizations aiming to tailor reward systems that align with the diverse needs of their workforce. By acknowledging demographic variations in reward preferences, employers can enhance satisfaction, increase engagement, and improve organizational effectiveness.

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