



## Rewards and Work Engagement of Non-Academic Staff: A Case of a Public University in Uganda

<sup>1</sup>Wilson Mugizi, PhD\*, <sup>1</sup>Abeera Odetha Katuramu, PhD, <sup>1</sup>Augustina Ogaga Dafiewhare, <sup>1</sup>John Kanyesigye  
<sup>1</sup>Kampala International University, Uganda

\*Corresponding author: [wilsonmugizi@kiu.ac.ug](mailto:wilsonmugizi@kiu.ac.ug)

**Abstract:** This study examined the relationship between employee rewards on work engagement of non-academic staff in a public University in Uganda. Specifically, the study analyzed relationship between intrinsic rewards and extrinsic rewards with work engagement of the support staff. Using a quantitative approach, the study adopted the correlational research design. Data were collected using a questionnaire survey. Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics were means while the inferential statistics included correlation and regression analysis. Descriptive results revealed that while the respondents rated intrinsic rewards, vigour and dedication high, absorption and extrinsic rewards were moderate. Inferential analyses revealed that both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards had a positive and significant relationship with work engagement. It was concluded that both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are essential for work engagement of employees. Therefore, it was recommended that management of universities such as human resource directorates should design jobs that offer intrinsic rewards to employees and provide extrinsic rewards that are attractive to employees.

**Key words:** Extrinsic, Intrinsic, Rewards, Work engagement, Support staff

### Introduction

The concept of work engagement emerged in the 1990s following a survey on employees and managers by the Gallup Research Group which coined the concept (Schaufeli, 2013). Since then, work engagement has been recognized globally by corporate organisations as a vital element affecting organizational effectiveness, innovation and competitiveness (Goodman, Genst, Cayo & Ng, 2009). The term work engagement has been described as a multi-dimensional concept explaining absorption, dedication and vigour of employees to their work (Vallières, McAuliffe, Hyland, Galligan & Ghee, 2017). Absorption refers to the state by which an employee is happily engrossed in and concentrates on work where time seems to pass rather quickly and where one has difficulty detaching themselves from their work (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008). Dedication is the heavy involvement in one's work and experiencing a

sense of challenge, pride and inspiration (Extremera, Mérida-López, Sánchez-Álvarez & Quintana-Orts, 2018). Vigour describes the willingness of the individual to persevere in the face of obstacles in the workplace or the willingness to continue to invest effort in one's work even when confronted with challenges (Vallières et al., 2017). Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) posit that engaged employees exhibit three behaviors namely stay, strive and invest. Therefore, work engagement at its core is the experience of energy effectively, the fuel of motivated behavior (Delaney & Royal, 2017).

Surveys on employee engagement such as the Corporate Communication International of US have showed that employee engagement is important for performance of organisations (Goodman et al., 2009). Work engagement surveys carried out by European governments have revealed that organisation's engagement strategies were

connected to business results. The surveys reveal that in those organisations where employee engagement was measured, there was a more positive change in employee aspects such as employee morale and engagement as well as a better ability to retain talent (Kassim & Turner, 2012). A UK government-sponsored review found out that employee engagement was a cause of concern for leaders in private, public and voluntary sector organisations (Welch, 2011). Surprisingly, Maurer (2013) revealed that employee engagement scores were higher in sub-Saharan Africa than other regions of the world. While the Global Engagement Survey published in June 2012 revealed that engagement levels globally were at 58 percent in 2011 up by 2 percentage points from 56 percent in 2010, Asia Pacific scored 58 percent, Europe 52 percent, Latin America 71 percent and North America 64 percent. However, a survey done in 2013 across sub-Saharan Africa representing more than 300,000 employees found out that 72 percent of employees were engaged with their work. This was the highest score in any global region. Nevertheless, in Sub-Saharan Africa there were significant regional differences in engagement scores with East Africa scoring 74 percent while Southern Africa (represented by Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland) scored 70 percent and South Africa 68 percent.

In Uganda, a study by Epiphany, Basheka and Muhenda (2013) carried out on staff of the Uganda Management Institute revealed that staff engagement was high ranging between 70% to 85% for the various items used to measure the concept. However, Kazimoto (2016) in an analysis of the relationship between employee engagement and performance from selected retailing business enterprises in Wobulenzi-Luweero town still in Uganda revealed that employee engagement was moderate around 50%. On the other hand, the Employer of the Year Award Survey conducted by the Federation of Uganda Employers partnership with Makerere University in 2018 revealed that only 49% of the employees were highly engaged, 6% were disengaged and 45% were moderately engaged. The combined percentage of those who were disengaged and moderately engaged was (51%) implying that the larger percentage of organisations in Uganda had employees with engagement challenges. However, the results from Uganda suggest contradictions on employee engagement because while Kazimoto (2016)

reported moderate employee engagement, Epiphany et al. (2013) reported that it was high. Still, only the study of Epiphany et al. (2013) was carried out in an institution of higher learning but did not relate rewards with employee engagement.

## **Related Literature and Studies**

This section presents review of related literature and studies. It begins with the theoretical underpinnings and then moves into literature that sets a foundation for the study.

### **Theoretical Underpinnings**

The Two Factor Theory advanced by Herzberg in 1959 informed this study. The theory conjectures that certain factors known as motivators or satisfiers in the workplace cause job satisfaction and a separate set of factors known as dissatisfiers (hygiene factors) cause dissatisfaction (Dartey-Baah & Amoako, 2011). Motivating factors or satisfiers are intrinsic factors in the job and these factors act as forces of job satisfaction. They create positive and a longer lasting effect on employee's performance and are related to the work itself (intrinsic). Adequate provision of such factors makes employees happy with their jobs because they serve man's basic needs for psychological growth. These factors include employee achievement, recognition for accomplishment, increased responsibility, opportunity for growth and development and creative and challenging work (Lee, 2017). Satisfiers motivate subordinates to take more interest and become engaged with their work raising efficiency and productivity. Motivating factors are essential in promoting job satisfaction of subordinates hence work engagement. Employees will not develop satisfaction which results in work engagement if the motivating factors are not provided in sufficient quality by the employer (Nabi, Islam, Dip & al Hossain, 2017).

Hygiene factors are extrinsic to the job and do little contribution to provide job satisfaction which is necessary for work engagement of subordinates yet their absence may cause dissatisfaction (disengagement) even though their presence is not motivating but only prevents dissatisfaction. The hygiene factors meet man's needs to avoid unpleasantness but do not motivate employees to take more interest in the work (Tan & Waheed, 2011) or get engaged in their work. Hygiene factors when provided create a favourable environment for motivation and prevent job dissatisfaction hence

work engagement of employees. They are related to the conditions under which a job is performed. When the employer is unable to provide enough of these factors to his employees, there will be job dissatisfaction (Asegid, Belachew & Yimam, 2014) and disengagement. Hygiene includes factors such as company's policies and administration, supervision, working conditions, interpersonal relations with superiors and other subordinates, salary, job security, status, personal life and employee benefits (Dartey-Baah & Amoako, 2011). Herzberg's Two Factor identifies factors that motivate employees hence leading to employee engagement. The factors are namely intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Therefore, Herzberg's Two Factor Theory was the basis in examining the relationship between employee rewards and employee engagement in this study.

### **Intrinsic Rewards and Work Engagement**

Intrinsic rewards refer to those rewards that generate personal and inner fulfilment in employees when they achieve something (Van Aswegen et al., 2009). Such rewards include employee achievement, recognition for accomplishment, increased responsibility, opportunity for growth and development and work difficulty (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Scholars have related intrinsic rewards and employee work engagement. Jacobs, Renard and Snelgar (2014) in a study involving employees from South African retail organisations revealed that there was a statistically positive and significant relationship between intrinsic rewards and employee engagement. Obicci (2015) seeking to uncover the influence of extrinsic and intrinsic rewards on employee engagement in the public sector with employees of Gulu District in Uganda as units of analysis found out that intrinsic rewards had a positive significant relationship with employee engagement. In their analysis of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations that predicted work engagement, Putra, Cho and Liu (2017) used employees working in restaurants in a Midwestern town in the United States. Their findings reported that intrinsic motivation played an important role in improving employees' work engagement.

Rehman, Shahzad, Khan and Khan (2016) in an empirical examination of the impact of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation on employee's engagement used health care workers in Peshawar, Pakistan. Their study established a significant relationship between intrinsic motivation and employee's

engagement. Victor and Hoole (2017) in a study involving South African employees in various industries within the Gauteng region found out that there was a positive and significant relationship between intrinsic rewards and employee work engagement. While the studies above showed that scholars had made significant effort to relate rewards and work engagement, only one study by Obicci (2015) was carried out in the context of Uganda, a developing country with working conditions very different from those of Asian, American and South African organisations where those studies were carried out. Even for the study in Uganda, it was carried out in a local government and not in an institution of higher learning. These contextual gaps made this study imperative in the context of a public university in Uganda to test the hypothesis to the effect that: H<sub>1</sub>: Intrinsic rewards have no significant influence on employee work engagement.

### **Extrinsic Rewards and Work Engagement**

Extrinsic rewards refer to the tangible benefits that employees receive for conducting their work (Victor & Hoole, 2017). Such rewards include organisational policies and administration, supervision, working conditions, interpersonal relations with superiors and other subordinates, salary, job security and status and personal life among others (Dartey-Baah & Amoako, 2011). A number of scholars have related extrinsic rewards and work engagement. For example, Getachew (2016) in a study on the relationship between rewards system and employee engagement using employees of a commercial Bank in Ethiopia reported a positive relationship between extrinsic rewards and employee engagement. Hoole and Hotz (2016) explored the relationship between total rewards and work engagement using employees in financial institutions in Gauteng in South African. Their findings indicated that extrinsic rewards as part of the total reward system had a positive and significant relationship with employee engagement. Singh (2016) analysed the impact of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators on employee engagement using postgraduate students from a Midwestern university in the USA. The findings revealed that extrinsic rewards in terms of money had the least effect on employee engagement.

Taufek, Zulkifle and Sharif (2016) examined the relationship between reward system and work engagement using staff of various companies in Rompin District, Pahang, Malaysia. The study

established that there was a positive and significant relationship between the reward system involving extrinsic rewards namely compensation and benefits and work engagement. Victor and Hoole (2017) studied the relationship between organisational rewards and work engagement with employees from various industries within the Gauteng region in South Africa. Their analysis revealed existence of a positive and significant relationship between intrinsic rewards and employee work engagement. The literature above showed that while significant research had been carried out on the relationship between extrinsic rewards and work engagement, contextual and empirical gaps emerged. For example, none of the studies was carried out in Uganda yet Uganda is a poor economy with limited extrinsic rewards compared to South Africa, USA and Asia where those studies were carried out. Still, while all the other studies revealed a significant relationship between extrinsic rewards and work engagement, Singh (2016) indicated that it had a least effect. These contextual and empirical gaps made imperative for this study to further seek to test the hypothesis to the effect that: H2: Extrinsic rewards have no significant influence on employee work engagement.

### **Research Methodology**

This section presents the methodology that guided this study. These include population and sampling, instruments and data management procedures.

### **Research Design**

The study adopted a correlational research design to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Using the correlation design, the researcher determined whether a significant association existed between the employee rewards and work engagement. The study adopted the quantitative approach of data collection and analysis. The approach was the basis for drawing statistical inferences by relating the independent and dependent variables.

### **Population and Sampling Procedures**

The sample of the study was 130 support staff from a population of 195 individuals including secretaries, technicians and custodians working in a public university in Uganda. Since the population was small, the researcher planned to study all of them as survey studies require a larger number of participants. However appropriate data was

obtained from that part of the population that became the sample for the study. The number of participants was considered a sufficient response rate (67%) because Mellahi and Harris (2016) indicate that a response rate of 50% and above is good in humanity studies.

### **Instrument**

The study was quantitative hence the data collection instrument was a self-administered questionnaire (SAQ). The SAQ was made up of three sections, namely; A, B and C. Section A covered demographic characteristics of the respondents that were gender, age group, highest level of education, length of service and type of job. Sections B and C were on the independent and dependent variables respectively. The items for the dependent variable (work engagement) were adopted from Schaufeli et al. (2006) and the items for the independent variables (intrinsic and extrinsic rewards) were adopted from Tremblay, Blanchard, Taylor, Pelletier and Villeneuve (2009). The ranking of the question items in the instrument was in five-point Likert Scale (Where 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Moderately Agree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree).

### **Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability of the instrument were ensured using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Cronbach's alpha respectively. Items loading highly above 0.50 were considered valid (Coetzee, Marx, & Potgieter, 2017) and reliabilities for the items under the different constructs were attained at  $\alpha = 0.60$  and above. This was because while a number of studies suggest that values higher than 0.7 are ideal, several researchers consider values under 0.70 but above 0.60 as satisfactory (Souza, Alexandre, & Guirardello, 2017). Factor Analysis and Cronbach's alpha results can be found in Table 2 and 3.

### **Data Management and Analysis**

Management of data involved processing of the data through coding, entering the data into the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, summarizing them using frequency tables to identify errors and editing them to remove errors. Data analysis involved descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involved calculation of means to give an indication of the typical response among respondents. Inferential analyses included correlation and regression analyses. Correlation analysis involved correlating the work engagement (dependent variable) and

rewards (independent variables). Regression analysis involved regressing the dependent (employee engagement) variable and the independent variables (rewards) to establish the existence of a cause effect relationship between rewards and work engagement.

## Analysis and Results

The analysis of data begins with presentation of demographic characteristics of respondents and

then moves into descriptive and inferential statistics aspect of data analysis.

### Demographic Characteristics

The results in Table 1 indicate that males were the larger percentage (61.5%). Likewise, those of the age group of up to 29 years (46.9%), holders of diplomas (46.9%), secretaries (22.3%) and having served 1 but less than 5 years (44.6%) were the majority as compared to their counterparts.

**Table 1: Respondents' Background Characteristics**

Item	Categories	Frequency	Percent
<b>Gender</b>	Male	80	61.5
	Female	50	38.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age Groups</b>	Up to 29 years	61	46.9
	30 to 39 years	53	40.8
	40 and above	16	12.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Education level</b>	Certificate	59	45.4
	Diploma	61	46.9
	Bachelor's degree	10	7.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Position at the University</b>	Secretary	29	22.3
	Library staff	23	17.7
	Office attendants	21	16.2
	Technicians	20	15.4
	Custodians	10	7.7
	Administrative Staff	27	20.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Experience</b>	Less than 1 year	21	16.2
	1 but less than 5 years	58	44.6
	5 but less than 10 years	28	21.5
	More than 10 years	23	17.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Work Engagement

In this subsection, the concept of work engagement was studied as a multi-dimensional concept describing absorption, dedication and vigour of support staff. The results on the same include means, factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) as presented in Table 2. Table 2 reveals that the non-academic staff of the university rated their absorption (mean = 3.60) and dedication (mean = 3.91) as high because they both corresponded to agreed. However, they rated their vigor as moderate (mean = 3.02) because the mean corresponded to

moderately agree. Factor Analysis showed that the items for absorption could be reduced to one factor

and loaded highly at 0.5 and above except for the last item which loaded low. For dedication and vigor, all the items also reduced to one factor and loaded highly. Therefore, the items were considered strong hence valid. The item that did not load was dropped from subsequent analysis because it was deemed weak hence invalid. With respect to reliability of the data, the initial Cronbach's alpha for absorption was  $\alpha = 0.616$  but after dropping the item that failed to load, Cronbach's alpha improved

to  $\alpha = 0.621$ . The Cronbach's alpha for dedication and vigor were attained at  $\alpha = 0.751$  and  $\alpha = 0.709$  respectively. The Cronbach's alphas for both

constructs were reliable measures of employee engagement concepts.

**Table 2: Work Engagement of Support Staff**

Absorption (Overall mean = 3.60)	Mean	Loading	$\alpha$
When I am working on my job assignment, I forget everything else around me	3.59	0.776	*0.616
I feel happy when am working intensely on my job assignments	3.40	0.708	**0.621
I am immersed in my work in this university	3.87	0.689	
Time flies when I am working on my job assignment	3.59	0.639	
I get carried away when am working on my assignments	3.68	0.636	
It is difficult to detach myself from this university	3.49	-	
Dedication (Overall Mean = 3.91)	Mean	Loading	$\alpha$
I am enthusiastic about my job in this university	3.87	0.735	0.751
I find the work I do full of meaning and purpose	4.17	0.727	
My job in this university inspires me	3.70	0.720	
I am proud of the work that I do in this university	4.28	0.685	
To me, my job is challenging	3.55	0.678	
Vigour (Overall mean =3.02)	Mean	Loading	$\alpha$
When I get up in the morning I feel like going to work on my assignment	2.89	0.732	0.709
At my work, I always persevere even when things do not go well	3.25	0.719	
At my work I am very resilient mentally	3.18	0.712	
When at my work I feel bursting with energy	3.13	0.630	
When at my job I feel strong and vigorous	2.65	0.619	

\*Initial Cronbach's alpha, \*\* subsequent Cronbach's alpha

**Table 3: Rewards**

Intrinsic Rewards (Overall mean = 3.61)	Mean	Loading	$\alpha$
My personal growth in terms of skills is satisfactory	3.61	0.863	0.736
I find my job in this university to be fun	3.67	0.844	
In this university I am given due recognition as a result of my contribution	3.48	0.773	
My career advancement is satisfactory	3.52	0.652	
My job in the university is pleasant to do	3.72	0.590	
My work in this university is challenging	3.72	0.576	
My achievements give me satisfaction	3.57	0.572	
Extrinsic Rewards (Overall mean = 3.24)	Mean	Loading	$\alpha$
I consider the salary paid to me for working adequate	2.90	0.825	
I am satisfied with the working conditions	3.18	0.798	0.674
My job provides me job security	3.63	0.786	
I am satisfied with my job status in this university	3.23	0.756	
I am satisfied with the way I am supervised	3.23	0.731	
The benefits offered to me in relation to my work are satisfying	2.53	0.607	
I consider the policies that govern my job appropriate	3.95	0.574	

### Rewards

This subsection presents descriptive results on reward which were studied in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic. The results on intrinsic and extrinsic rewards include means, factor loadings and Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) as presented in Table 3. Table 3 showed that the non-academic staff of the university rated their intrinsic rewards (mean = 3.61) as high and extrinsic rewards (mean = 3.24) as moderate. Factor Analysis showed that the items for both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards could be

reduced to only one factor. All the items obtained factor loadings of 0.5 and above suggesting that they were all valid. The Cronbach's alphas were  $\alpha = 0.736$  and  $\alpha = 0.674$  for intrinsic and extrinsic rewards respectively. The Cronbach's alphas for both constructs were reliable measures of rewards.

### Correlation of Rewards and Work Engagement

To establish whether there was a relationship between employee rewards and work engagement,

a correlation analysis was carried out. The results are presented in Table 4.

The results in Table 4 suggest that there is a positive significant relationship between employee rewards and work engagement. The critical values for the two employee rewards namely intrinsic and extrinsic, and work engagement were significant at below 0.05. This indicated the rejection of the null hypotheses to the effect that there is a significant relationship between intrinsic rewards and work

engagement of support staff ( $r = 0.472, p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ), and there is a significant relationship between extrinsic rewards and work engagement of support staff ( $r = 0.838, p = 0.000 < 0.005$ ). However, while positive and significant relationships were established between the variables, for intrinsic motivation the relationship was moderate. These preliminary results suggest that extrinsic motivation correlated more highly with work engagement than intrinsic motivation.

**Table 4: Correlation of Employee Rewards and Work Engagement**

	Work Engagement	Intrinsic Rewards	Extrinsic Rewards
Work Engagement	1		
Intrinsic Rewards	0.472** 0.000	1	
Extrinsic Rewards	0.838** 0.000	0.344** 0.001	1

**Table 5: Regression of Work Engagement on Employee Rewards**

Work Engagement	Standardised Coefficients Beta ( $\beta$ )	Significance (P)
Intrinsic Rewards	0.208	0.001
Extrinsic Rewards	0.766	0.000

Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.733$   
 $F = 113.723, p = 0.000$

### Regression of Work Engagement on Rewards

At the confirmatory level, to find out whether work engagement was determined by employee rewards, regression analysis was carried out. The results were as seen in Table 5.

The results in Table 5 show that employee rewards explained 73.3% of the variation in work engagement (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.733$ ). This means that 26.7% was accounted for by other factors not considered in this model. The regression model was significant ( $F = 113.723, p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). Both employee rewards namely intrinsic ( $\beta = 0.208, p = 0.001 < 0.05$ ) and extrinsic rewards ( $\beta = 0.766, p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ) had positive significant relationships with work engagement. However, while the relationship for intrinsic motivation was a moderate one, the relationship for extrinsic motivation was a highly significant one. This means that both hypotheses one and two (H1 & H2) were rejected. The magnitudes of the respective betas suggested that extrinsic rewards had the most significant relationship with work engagement.

### Discussion

The first hypothesis tested the significance of the relationship between intrinsic rewards and work engagement of support staff. Hypothesis test results confirmed that there was a significant positive relationship between intrinsic rewards and work engagement of support staff. This finding concurred with the findings of the studies by Renard and Snelgar (2014), Obicci (2015), Putra et al. (2017), Rehman et al. (2016) and Victor and Hoole (2017) which all established the existence of positive significant relationships between intrinsic rewards and work engagement. However, the relationship established by the current study was a moderate one meaning that intrinsic rewards are not the most significant predictors of work engagement of support staff. The second hypothesis tested the significance of the relationship between extrinsic rewards and work engagement of support staff. The results of the study revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between extrinsic rewards and work engagement of support staff. This

finding was consistent with the findings of studies by Getachew (2016), Hoole and Hotz (2016), Taufek et al. (2016) and Victor and Hoole (2017) which all reported positive significant relationship between extrinsic rewards and employee engagement. Nevertheless, the finding of the study was inconsistent with the findings by Singh (2016) who reported that extrinsic rewards in terms of money had the least effect on employee engagement. On the contrary, the current study established the most positive and significant compared to intrinsic rewards. This suggested that support staff extrinsic rewards were more highly valued.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

The discussion led to the conclusion that intrinsic rewards are imperative for work engagement of support staff although not as much as extrinsic rewards. Intrinsic rewards promote work engagement when achievements emanating from the job offer satisfaction, the work is interesting, the job offers satisfactory career advancement, employees experience personal growth in terms of skills, find their work challenging, the jobs are pleasant to do and employees find their jobs fun. With respect to extrinsic rewards, they are very essential for work engagement of support staff. Such extrinsic rewards include job security, the job offering a satisfying status and working conditions, there being good work policies, satisfying supervision and good relations between subordinates and superiors.

This study recommends that management of universities such as human resource directorates should design jobs that offer intrinsic rewards to employees. The jobs should lead to achievements that offer satisfaction to employees, be interesting, offer satisfactory career advancement and offer employees personal growth in terms of skills. The work done should also be challenging, pleasant to do and fun for employees. Further, management of universities should provide extrinsic rewards that are attractive to employees. For instance, the jobs should offer job security, offer satisfying status and good working conditions. Work policies should be appropriate, there should be satisfying supervision and good relations between superiors and fellow workers should be promoted.

## Contributions and Limitations

The practical and theoretical contribution of this study is that it identifies the most important rewards cherished by support staff in universities between intrinsic rewards and extrinsic rewards. Work engagement of support staff is more predicted by extrinsic rewards. Whereas this makes significant contributions regarding rewards and work engagement of support staff, a number of limitations emerged. First, the study was carried out on support staff of one public university. Therefore, future studies should be done in more universities both public and private. In addition, the study adopted the quantitative approach only. Thus, future studies should consider the qualitative approach to provide detailed explanations about the relationship between rewards and work engagement.

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