

Reward and Recognition Practices and Job Satisfaction in Casual Dining-Restaurants in Metro Manila

Dr. Jeffrey B. Villena., Mr. Jason Robert P. Santos., Mr. Marvin Lhenard B. Alunan

College of Hospitality and Tourism Management Eulogio “Amang” Rodriguez Institute of Science and Technology, Manila, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction among managers, supervisors, and staff in selected casual dining establishments in Metro Manila. It analyzed how recognition systems, perceived fairness of rewards, supervisory support, and workplace conditions influence employee satisfaction while identifying key workplace challenges. A mixed-methods design was employed, integrating survey data from 90 respondents (15 managers, 15 supervisors, and 60 staff) with semi-structured interviews.

Results indicate that reward and recognition practices are generally highly implemented, particularly in terms of timely acknowledgment, consistent feedback, and equitable access to rewards. Job satisfaction was also rated highly, with employees emphasizing positive workplace relationships, meaningful roles, and supportive supervision. Statistical analysis revealed a moderate, significant relationship between reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction ($r = 0.507$, $p < .001$). However, the strength of this relationship suggests that additional factors such as interpersonal dynamics and organizational culture also play a substantial role.

The findings underscore the need to strengthen performance-based rewards, improve consistency in recognition practices, expand non-monetary incentives, and enhance supervisory support. These strategies may improve employee satisfaction, service quality, and long-term sustainability in the hospitality sector.

Keywords: Reward and Recognition Practices, Job Satisfaction, Casual Dining Restaurants, Employee Motivation, Hospitality Industry, Metro Manila

INTRODUCTION

The success of casual dining restaurants depends not only on service quality and operational efficiency but also on the motivation, satisfaction, and well-being of the workforce that drives customer experiences and business outcomes. Within these establishments, managers oversee operations and strategic direction, supervisors coordinate daily service delivery, and staff perform essential front-line functions such as food preparation and customer service. Together, these roles sustain service standards and directly influence customer satisfaction and organizational performance. Despite this, industry discourse often prioritizes sales performance and customer ratings, with comparatively less emphasis on workplace practices that shape employee experiences. Reward and recognition systems, supervisory support, and equitable working conditions play a critical role in fostering motivation and mitigating workplace stressors in fast-paced restaurant environments.

The hospitality industry in the Philippines, particularly in urban centers such as Metro Manila, is a key driver of employment and economic activity. Casual dining establishments operate in a highly competitive setting where service quality and employee performance are central to business success. However, the sector continues to face persistent challenges, including high employee turnover, low morale, inconsistent service quality, and reduced productivity. These concerns are frequently associated with limited reward opportunities, inconsistent recognition practices, and workplace conditions that inadequately support employee needs.

Addressing these issues requires a clearer understanding of how human resource practices influence employee satisfaction and engagement.

This study aims to examine the relationship between reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction among managers, supervisors, and staff in selected casual dining establishments in Metro Manila. The findings seek to provide evidence-based insights for restaurant owners, managers, and human resource practitioners to enhance employee motivation, improve service delivery, and strengthen organizational sustainability. Such understanding is essential not only for employee well-being but also for maintaining competitiveness in the hospitality sector.

Metro Manila was selected as the study context due to its high concentration and diversity of casual dining establishments, encompassing varied service models, workforce structures, and organizational cultures. This setting provides a relevant context for examining workplace practices in fast-paced, customer-driven environments and offers insights applicable to similar hospitality settings across the Philippines.

This study is grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), which explains how job characteristics influence employee well-being and performance. The theory posits that all jobs consist of demands (e.g., workload, customer pressure, emotional labor) and resources (e.g., rewards, recognition, supervisory support, and autonomy). Job resources enable employees to manage demands, sustain engagement, and achieve positive outcomes, whereas insufficient resources may lead to stress and dissatisfaction. In this context, reward and recognition practices function as critical job resources that enhance motivation and job satisfaction. Guided by the JD–R framework, this study investigates how these practices influence job satisfaction, providing a basis for developing strategies to support a motivated and sustainable workforce in the casual dining sector.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction. The quantitative component utilized structured surveys to measure perceptions of reward and recognition practices, supervisory support, and job satisfaction. The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews to capture in-depth insights into participants' experiences, perceptions of recognition systems, and contextual factors influencing job satisfaction.

Purposive sampling with stratified representation was used to select 90 respondents, comprising 15 managers, 15 supervisors, and 60 staff from selected casual dining establishments in Metro Manila. Participants were categorized into managerial, supervisory, and staff strata to ensure proportional representation across organizational levels and enhance the reliability of comparisons. This approach facilitated the deliberate selection of individuals with relevant experience in reward and recognition systems within fast-paced, customer-facing environments (Etikan et al., 2016; Palinkas et al., 2015; Robinson, 2014).

Data were collected using survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to ensure both breadth and depth of analysis. The survey instrument consisted of closed-ended questions and 5-point Likert-scale items assessing reward and recognition practices, perceived fairness of rewards, supervisory support, work environment, and job satisfaction. Each item was aligned with the study variables to enable systematic comparison across respondent groups (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2020).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants using an interview guide aligned with the study variables. Questions explored perceptions of reward and recognition systems, factors influencing job satisfaction, workplace experiences, and perceived challenges. Triangulation was achieved by integrating quantitative results with qualitative themes, thereby enhancing the credibility, validity, and depth of the findings (Fetters et al., 2013; O’Cathain, 2018).

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlation analysis to examine relationships between reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction. Qualitative data were analyzed through

thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and key themes related to employee experiences and perceptions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. How do the Managers, Supervisors and Staff assess the reward and recognition practices in Casual Dining-Restaurants in Metro Manila?

Table 1. Assessment of Reward and Recognition Practices in Casual Dining-Restaurants in Metro Manila

Indicators	Managers		Supervisors		Staff		Composite Mean		Rank
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	
1. Immediate supervisors provide regular acknowledgment of work efforts.	4.67	HP	4.80	HP	4.60	HP	4.69	HP	1
2. Reward allocation reflects the level of individual performance and contribution.	4.53	HP	4.87	HP	4.40	HP	4.6	HP	4
3. Exceptional performance is formally recognized within the organization.	4.33	HP	4.73	HP	4.63	HP	4.56	HP	5
4. A combination of monetary and non-monetary rewards is practiced.	4.20	HP	4.47	HP	4.40	HP	4.36	HP	10
5. The distribution of rewards is perceived as fair and transparent.	4.27	HP	4.60	HP	4.50	HP	4.46	HP	7
6. Reward and recognition practices encourage improved work performance.	4.33	HP	4.60	HP	4.53	HP	4.49	HP	6
7. Opportunities to receive rewards and recognition are equally accessible.	4.47	HP	4.80	HP	4.57	HP	4.61	HP	3
8. Recognition is given in a timely manner following commendable performance.	4.67	HP	4.73	HP	4.60	HP	4.67	HP	2
9. Guidelines and criteria for rewards and recognition are clearly communicated.	4.20	HP	4.53	HP	4.50	HP	4.41	HP	9
10. Reward and recognition programs are implemented consistently across staff.	4.40	HP	4.60	HP	4.30	HP	4.43	HP	8
Overall Mean	4.41	HP	4.67	HP	4.50	HP	4.53	HP	

Legend: WM-Weighted Mean, VI-Verbal Interpretation

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation	Symbol
5	4.20 – 5.00	Highly Practiced	HP
4	3.40 – 4.19	Practiced	P
3	2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Practiced	MP
2	1.80 – 2.59	Least Practiced	LP
1	1.00 – 1.79	Not Practiced	NP

As presented in Table 1, the assessment of Reward and Recognition Practices in selected casual dining restaurants in Metro Manila indicates that the three groups of respondents Managers, Supervisors, and Staff generally perceived the organization’s reward and recognition practices as highly practiced. The indicator “Immediate supervisors provide regular acknowledgment of work efforts” obtained the highest composite mean of 4.69, interpreted as Highly Practiced (HP). This suggests that respondents across all organizational

levels generally agree that supervisors actively recognize and acknowledge the efforts of their team members, reinforcing motivation and engagement.

The next highest-rated indicators, “Recognition is given in a timely manner following commendable performance” and “Opportunities to receive rewards and recognition are equally accessible”, garnered composite means of 4.67 and 4.61, respectively, both interpreted as HP. These findings imply that managers, supervisors, and staff perceive recognition practices as prompt, equitable, and inclusive, creating a positive environment where exemplary performance is acknowledged fairly across different employee groups.

Indicators such as “Reward allocation reflects the level of individual performance and contribution” (4.60, HP) and “Exceptional performance is formally recognized within the organization” (4.56, HP) also received high ratings, demonstrating that employees value performance-based recognition and formal acknowledgment systems. Meanwhile, indicators like “A combination of monetary and non-monetary rewards is practiced” (4.36, HP) and “Guidelines and criteria for rewards and recognition are clearly communicated” (4.41, HP) were rated slightly lower, suggesting that while reward mechanisms are in place, there may be room to enhance communication and diversify recognition methods to maximize their impact.

Overall, the general assessment of reward and recognition practices yielded a composite mean of 4.53, interpreted as Highly Practiced (HP). This reflects that casual dining restaurants in Metro Manila have implemented reward and recognition systems that effectively support motivation, satisfaction, and performance. The findings highlight the importance of consistent and transparent recognition practices, timely acknowledgment of contributions, and equitable access to rewards as strategies that strengthen employee morale and engagement.

These findings align with recent studies emphasizing the critical role of reward and recognition in organizational settings. Armstrong (2022) highlighted that recognition and reward systems significantly enhance motivation and work engagement, while Gupta and Shaw (2021) found that employees who perceive fairness and consistency in reward allocation report higher job satisfaction and commitment. In the context of the hospitality industry, Karatepe and Ngeche (2022) reported that recognition practices, including both monetary and non-monetary rewards, contribute positively to service quality and employee performance. Furthermore, Podsakoff et al. (2021) emphasized that regular acknowledgment by supervisors fosters trust, loyalty, and sustained motivation among staff in customer-facing organizations.

2. Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the three groups of respondents of the Reward and Recognition Practices in Casual Dining-Restaurants in Metro Manila?

Table 2. Post on the Significant Difference in the Assessment of the Reward and Recognition Practices in Casual Dining-Restaurants in Metro Manila.

Variable	Groups	Mean	F-value	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Reward and Recognition Practices	Manager	4.41	2.36	0.1037	Fail to Reject Ho	Not Significant
	Supervisor	4.67				
	Staff	4.50				

Note: One-Way ANOVA was used with $df = (2, 87)$ at a 0.05 significance level. A p -value < 0.05 indicates a significant difference among the groups.

As presented in Table 2, a One-Way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether a significant difference exists in the assessment of Reward and Recognition Practices among the three groups of respondents Managers, Supervisors, and Staff in casual dining restaurants in Metro Manila. The mean scores were 4.41 for Managers, 4.67 for Supervisors, and 4.50 for Staff. Although Supervisors reported the highest rating and Managers the lowest, all mean values fall within the Highly Practiced (HP) range of the Likert scale, indicating a generally positive perception of the reward and recognition program across all organizational levels.

The ANOVA results yielded an F-value of 2.36 and a p-value of 0.1037, which exceeds the 0.05 significance level. Therefore, the study fails to reject the null hypothesis, confirming that the differences in assessments among Managers, Supervisors, and Staff are not statistically significant.

This finding suggests that the reward and recognition program is consistently perceived across hierarchical levels within these organizations. The absence of statistically significant differences indicates that all groups share a generally aligned understanding of how rewards and recognition are implemented. This consistency reflects effective communication, equitable application, and inclusivity in recognizing employee performance. While numerical differences in means exist, they do not indicate substantial perceptual disparities, reinforcing the credibility and acceptability of the program among Managers, Supervisors, and Staff alike.

These results are supported by recent studies emphasizing the importance of systematic and equitable recognition practices in organizations. Lee and Kim (2023) highlighted that standardized recognition programs across all organizational levels foster shared experiences of motivation and engagement. Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2022) found that transparent and fair recognition practices reduce perceptual differences in job satisfaction across hierarchical roles. In the hospitality and restaurant industry, Cheng and Tsai (2023) reported that employees at different positions demonstrate similar levels of satisfaction and commitment when reward systems are consistently applied. Furthermore, Al-Zu'bi (2022) emphasized that inclusive and fair recognition processes lead to uniform perceptions of morale and workplace performance, irrespective of employee role or seniority.

3. How do the three groups of respondents assess the Job Satisfaction in Casual Dining-Restaurants in Metro Manila?

Table 3. Assessment of Job Satisfaction in Casual Dining-Restaurants in Metro Manila

Indicators	Managers		Supervisors		Staff		Composite Mean		Rank
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	
1. Workplace relationships are characterized by cooperation and mutual respect.	4.53	HS	5.00	HS	4.50	HS	4.68	HS	1
2. Daily work activities provide a sense of fulfillment.	4.33	HS	4.93	HS	4.37	HS	4.54	HS	4
3. Compensation and benefits meet work-related expectations.	3.93	S	4.80	HS	4.53	HS	4.42	HS	9
4. Supervisory support contributes positively to work experiences.	4.40	HS	4.73	HS	4.47	HS	4.53	HS	5
5. Assigned roles and responsibilities are perceived as appropriate and manageable.	4.60	HS	4.47	HS	4.70	HS	4.59	HS	3
6. The work environment supports comfort, safety, and productivity.	4.13	S	4.60	HS	4.57	HS	4.43	HS	7
7. A sense of being valued and appreciated in the workplace is experienced.	4.13	S	4.53	HS	4.63	HS	4.43	HS	8
8. Work schedules and workload are perceived as reasonable and manageable.	3.93	S	4.93	HS	4.63	HS	4.50	HS	6

9. Satisfaction derived from performing assigned job duties is evident.	4.40	HS	4.80	HS	4.63	HS	4.61	HS	2
10. Intention to remain in the organization is evident.	3.93	S	4.53	HS	4.33	HS	4.26	HS	10
Overall Mean	4.23	HS	4.73	HS	4.54	HS	4.50	HS	

Legend: **WM**-Weighted Mean, **VI**-Verbal Interpretation

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation	Symbol
5	4.20 – 5.00	Highly Satisfied	HS
4	3.40 – 4.19	Satisfied	S
3	2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Satisfied	MS
2	1.80 – 2.59	Least Satisfied	LS
1	1.00 – 1.79	Not Satisfied	NS

As presented in Table 3, the assessment of Job Satisfaction among Managers, Supervisors, and Staff in casual dining restaurants in Metro Manila indicates generally favorable perceptions across all groups. The highest-rated indicator, “Workplace relationships are characterized by cooperation and mutual respect,” received a composite mean of 4.68, interpreted as Highly Satisfied (HS). This suggests that positive interpersonal relationships and mutual support are consistently experienced across all organizational levels, contributing significantly to overall satisfaction.

The next highest-rated indicators include “Satisfaction derived from performing assigned job duties” (WM = 4.61, HS) and “Assigned roles and responsibilities are perceived as appropriate and manageable” (WM = 4.59, HS), reflecting that staff find their work meaningful, appropriately structured, and manageable. Other indicators, such as “Daily work activities provide a sense of fulfillment” (WM = 4.54, HS) and “Supervisory support contributes positively to work experiences” (WM = 4.53, HS), reinforce the importance of supportive supervision and engaging job tasks in promoting satisfaction among restaurant staff.

Indicators related to compensation, work environment, and workload “Compensation and benefits meet work-related expectations” (WM = 4.42, HS), “The work environment supports comfort, safety, and productivity” (WM = 4.43, HS), and “Work schedules and workload are perceived as reasonable and manageable” (WM = 4.50, HS)—also received high ratings, suggesting that financial and structural support contributes meaningfully to job satisfaction. The lowest-rated indicator, “Intention to remain in the organization is evident” (WM = 4.26, HS), indicates that while overall satisfaction is high, some staff may be evaluating career mobility or long-term retention, pointing to potential opportunities for strengthening organizational commitment.

Overall, the composite mean of 4.50 (HS) reflects that employees across managerial, supervisory, and staff levels are generally highly satisfied with their work conditions, relationships, and support systems. This finding underscores the importance of fostering positive workplace interactions, fair and equitable treatment, and adequate resources to maintain high levels of satisfaction in the casual dining sector.

These findings are supported by recent studies emphasizing the factors influencing job satisfaction in service and hospitality contexts. Karatepe & Olugbade (2022) highlighted that supportive supervision, fair compensation, and effective teamwork significantly enhance job satisfaction among restaurant employees. Similarly, Sun et al. (2023) found that meaningful work, recognition, and positive interpersonal relationships are critical drivers of satisfaction and engagement in the hospitality industry. In addition, Jiang et al. (2022) reported that organizational practices promoting fairness, autonomy, and work-life balance contribute to consistent high satisfaction across hierarchical levels. Furthermore, Chandrakumara & Sparrow (2023) emphasized that alignment between employee expectations and job responsibilities, coupled with a safe and collaborative work environment, reinforces job satisfaction and retention in service-oriented organizations.

4. Is there a significant relationship between the reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction?

Table 4. Significant Relationship Between Reward and Recognition Practices and Job Satisfaction

Variables	r-value	Strength of Relationship	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Reward and Recognition Practices and Job Satisfaction	0.507	Moderate Correlation	<0.0001	Reject Ho	Significant

Note: The statistical test used was the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. If the p-value is less than the level of significance, reject the null hypothesis (Ho). Otherwise, fail to reject the null hypothesis (Ho).

Legend:

Range	Verbal Interpretation	Symbol
0.80 – 0.99	Very High Correlation	VHC
0.60 – 0.79	High Correlation	HC
0.40 – 0.59	Moderate Correlation	MC
0.10 – 0.39	Low Correlation	LC
0.01 – 0.09	Negligible Correlation	NC

As presented in Table 4, the analysis determined the significant relationship between reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction in casual dining restaurants in Metro Manila using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The computed r-value of 0.507 falls within the moderate correlation range, indicating a positive and meaningful linear relationship between the two variables. This suggests that improvements in reward and recognition practices are associated with corresponding increases in job satisfaction among managers, supervisors, and staff.

The p-value (<0.0001) is below the 0.05 level of significance, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis and confirming that the relationship between reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction is statistically significant. This finding underscores the critical role of structured, timely, and equitable recognition systems in fostering employee motivation, morale, and satisfaction. The moderate strength of the correlation indicates that while reward and recognition are important contributors, other organizational and contextual factors also influence job satisfaction.

These results are consistent with existing literature. Bibi et al. (2021) found that reward systems significantly influence job satisfaction and employee retention, particularly in service-oriented industries. Kuvaas et al. (2022) emphasized that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards positively affect employee motivation and satisfaction when perceived as fair and meaningful. Riyanto et al. (2021) reported that recognition and reward practices have a direct and significant effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Saks (2022) highlighted that employees perceiving strong organizational support through rewards and recognition are more engaged and satisfied, resulting in improved performance and reduced turnover intentions.

Beyond statistical significance, the moderate correlation ($r = 0.507$) indicates that reward and recognition practices account for approximately 25% of the variance in job satisfaction, suggesting that a substantial portion of employee satisfaction is influenced by other factors not fully captured in the quantitative model. This highlights the presence of “hidden drivers” that complement formal reward systems.

Qualitative findings from interviews provide deeper insight into these drivers. Employees consistently emphasized the importance of workplace relationships, teamwork, and supervisory support as central to their job satisfaction. These findings reflect culturally embedded Filipino values such as *pakikisama* (harmonious interpersonal relationships), which fosters cooperation and a sense of belonging in the workplace. In high-interaction environments like casual dining restaurants, these social dynamics are critical in shaping employee experiences beyond formal reward structures.

Additionally, the concept of *utang na loob* (reciprocity) provides further explanation of employee motivation. When recognition is perceived as sincere and meaningful, employees are more likely to respond with loyalty and increased effort. However, when rewards are seen as inconsistent or purely transactional, their motivational impact diminishes despite their frequency.

External and contextual factors also emerged as important influences on job satisfaction. Work-life balance, workload pressures, and commuting challenges—common in highly urbanized areas such as Metro Manila—affect employee well-being but are not directly addressed by reward systems. These findings reinforce the argument of the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) framework that job resources must interact with broader organizational and environmental conditions to effectively enhance employee outcomes.

Overall, the findings suggest that reward and recognition practices function as important, but not exclusive, predictors of job satisfaction. Their effectiveness is significantly enhanced when integrated with supportive leadership, positive workplace relationships, and culturally aligned management practices.

5. What are the problems encountered relative to the reward and recognition and job satisfaction?

Table 5 Assessment of Problems Encountered Relative to the Reward and Recognition and Job Satisfaction

Indicators	Managers		Supervisors		Staff		Composite Mean		Rank
	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	WM	VI	
1. Cooperation and collaboration among coworkers can be enhanced.	2.07	LE	2.80	ME	2.43	LE	2.43	LE	7
2. Guidelines and criteria for rewards and recognition are unclear to some staff.	1.80	LE	3.07	ME	2.37	LE	2.41	LE	8
3. Access to rewards and recognition can vary among staff.	1.80	LE	2.87	ME	2.30	LE	2.32	LE	9.5
4. Some tasks or responsibilities require additional clarity or balance.	2.00	LE	3.13	ME	2.43	LE	2.52	LE	4
5. Rewards occasionally fail to fully reflect individual performance.	1.87	LE	3.27	ME	2.50	LE	2.55	LE	2
6. Compensation and benefits occasionally fall short of expectations.	1.87	LE	3.13	ME	2.77	ME	2.59	LE	1
7. Supervisory support may vary across different situations.	1.60	LE	3.13	ME	2.63	ME	2.45	LE	6
8. Recognition timing for commendable performance varies.	2.13	LE	3.07	ME	2.43	LE	2.54	LE	3
9. Opportunities for non-monetary recognition (praise, certificates) are limited.	1.73	NE	2.87	ME	2.37	LE	2.32	LE	9.5
10. Work environment sometimes lacks optimal comfort, safety, or resources.	2.27	LE	2.73	ME	2.47	LE	2.49	LE	5
Overall Mean	1.91	LE	3.01	ME	2.47	LE	2.46	LE	

Legend:

Scale	Range	Verbal Interpretation	Symbol
5	4.20 – 5.00	Highly Encountered	HE
4	3.40 – 4.19	Encountered	E
3	2.60 – 3.39	Moderately Encountered	ME
2	1.80 – 2.59	Least Encountered	LE
1	1.00 – 1.79	Not Encountered	NE

As presented in Table 5, the assessment of problems encountered relative to Reward and Recognition Practices and Job Satisfaction in casual dining restaurants in Metro Manila reveals that the three groups of respondents, Managers, Supervisors, and Staff, generally experienced these issues to a low extent. The overall composite mean of 2.46, interpreted as Least Encountered (LE), indicates that while certain concerns are present, they are not pervasive and have minimal impact on employees' overall satisfaction and perception of reward and recognition practices.

The most prominent problem, ranked first, is "Compensation and benefits occasionally fall short of expectations," with a composite mean of 2.59 (LE). This suggests that although compensation-related concerns exist, they are experienced at a relatively low level but remain an area that may influence employee satisfaction and retention. Closely following is "Rewards occasionally fail to fully reflect individual performance," ranked second with a composite mean of 2.55 (LE), indicating that some employees perceive a gap between performance and the rewards received.

The third-ranked problem, "Recognition timing for commendable performance varies," obtained a composite mean of 2.54 (LE), reflecting occasional inconsistencies in the promptness of recognition. Similarly, "Some tasks or responsibilities require additional clarity or balance" (2.52, LE) and "Work environment sometimes lacks optimal comfort, safety, or resources" (2.49, LE) ranked fourth and fifth, suggesting that while job roles and working conditions are generally acceptable, there are opportunities for further improvement to enhance employee experience.

Mid-level concerns include "Supervisory support may vary across different situations" (2.45, LE) and "Cooperation and collaboration among coworkers can be enhanced" (2.43, LE), indicating that interpersonal and leadership-related aspects, although not highly problematic, can still be strengthened to promote a more cohesive and supportive work environment.

The least encountered problems include "Guidelines and criteria for rewards and recognition are unclear to some staff" (2.41, LE), "Access to rewards and recognition can vary among staff" (2.32, LE), and "Opportunities for non-monetary recognition are limited" (2.32, LE). The findings demonstrate that issues related to communication and accessibility of recognition systems are minimal but still warrant attention to ensure inclusivity and transparency.

Group-level analysis shows that Supervisors (3.01, Moderately Encountered) reported higher levels of perceived problems compared to Staff (2.47, LE) and Managers (1.91, LE). This implies that supervisors, who serve as a link between management and staff, may be more exposed to operational challenges and inconsistencies in implementing reward and recognition practices.

Overall, the findings indicate that problems encountered in casual dining restaurants in Metro Manila are generally minimal and manageable. However, areas such as compensation, alignment of rewards with performance, and consistency in recognition practices require continued attention. Addressing these concerns can further enhance employee satisfaction, strengthen motivation, and support a more effective and sustainable reward and recognition system within the organization.

Interview Results

The interviews with selected managers, supervisors, and staff provided rich qualitative insights into reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction in casual dining restaurants in Metro Manila. Participants

consistently emphasized that recognition from supervisors plays a significant role in motivating performance and maintaining positive work attitudes. Many staff described their experience as “encouraging when efforts are acknowledged,” while supervisors noted that “simple recognition, such as praise or acknowledgment, helps boost morale and productivity.” These responses indicate that recognition practices contribute positively to motivation, engagement, and satisfaction in the workplace. These observations support studies highlighting that recognition and appreciation are key drivers of employee motivation and workplace satisfaction (Nelson & Spitzer, 2021; Hewagama et al., 2022).

Despite these strengths, respondents identified several challenges affecting both reward systems and job satisfaction. A commonly raised concern was the alignment of rewards with actual performance, with some participants expressing that “rewards do not always reflect the level of effort exerted.” This suggests that inconsistencies in performance-based rewards may influence perceptions of fairness and satisfaction. Such findings align with studies indicating that perceived inequity in reward distribution can affect motivation and reduce job satisfaction (Adams & Freedman, 2022; Malik et al., 2023).

Another concern involves compensation and benefits, particularly in relation to workload and job demands. Some staff shared that “compensation could be more aligned with the intensity of work, especially during peak hours,” indicating that financial rewards remain an important factor influencing satisfaction. Supervisors also acknowledged that while recognition practices are present, “balancing financial and non-financial rewards remains a challenge.” This observation is supported by research showing that both monetary and non-monetary rewards are essential in enhancing satisfaction and retention in service-oriented industries (Kwon & Jang, 2022; Kim & Lee, 2023).

Issues related to the consistency and timing of recognition were also highlighted. Some respondents mentioned that recognition is sometimes delayed or varies depending on the situation, as reflected in the statement, “Recognition is given, but timing and consistency can still be improved.” This suggests that while recognition systems exist, their effectiveness may be influenced by how consistently and promptly they are implemented. Similar findings were reported in studies emphasizing that timely and consistent recognition strengthens employee engagement and satisfaction (Aguinis et al., 2023; Singh et al., 2022).

In terms of job satisfaction, respondents generally expressed positive experiences related to workplace relationships, teamwork, and supervisory support. Many participants highlighted that “cooperation among coworkers makes the work environment more enjoyable,” while others noted that “supportive supervisors contribute to a more satisfying work experience.” However, some respondents indicated that workload and scheduling demands occasionally affect their overall satisfaction, particularly during peak business periods. Despite these challenges, employees emphasized that teamwork and mutual support help maintain a positive work environment. These findings are consistent with research indicating that supportive work relationships and effective leadership significantly enhance job satisfaction, even in high-demand service settings (Alola et al., 2022; Karatepe et al., 2023).

Overall, the interview results suggest that while reward and recognition practices in casual dining restaurants in Metro Manila are generally effective in promoting motivation and satisfaction, opportunities exist to enhance fairness, consistency, and alignment with performance. Strengthening these areas can further improve job satisfaction, employee engagement, and organizational effectiveness.

Thematic Analysis

A deeper analysis of the interview data revealed five overarching themes that explain the relationship between reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction:

1. **Recognition as a Driver of Motivation and Satisfaction.** Participants across all groups emphasized that acknowledgment of efforts, whether formal or informal, enhances motivation and reinforces positive work behavior. Regular praise, feedback, and appreciation from supervisors contribute to a stronger sense of value and satisfaction in the workplace.

2. **Perceived Fairness and Alignment of Rewards.** Respondents highlighted that the alignment of rewards with actual performance influences their level of satisfaction. When rewards reflect effort and contribution, employees feel motivated and appreciated; however, inconsistencies in reward allocation may affect perceptions of fairness and overall satisfaction.
3. **Importance of Compensation and Non-Monetary Incentives.** Both monetary and non-monetary rewards emerged as essential components of job satisfaction. Participants noted that competitive compensation, along with incentives such as recognition, certificates, or career opportunities, enhances their motivation and encourages continued engagement in their roles.
4. **Consistency and Support in Recognition Practices.** The effectiveness of reward and recognition systems is influenced by the consistency and timeliness of implementation, as well as supervisory support. Variations in how recognition is delivered may affect employee experiences, while supportive leadership and clear communication strengthen satisfaction and workplace morale.
5. **Hidden Drivers of Job Satisfaction Beyond Rewards.** While reward and recognition practices contribute significantly to employee motivation, participants emphasized that job satisfaction is also shaped by less visible but equally important factors. These include interpersonal relationships, teamwork, cultural values, and external conditions such as workload and commuting challenges. These “hidden drivers” explain why satisfaction levels remain high even when reward systems are not perfectly aligned with performance. This finding highlights the need for a more holistic approach to employee engagement that goes beyond formal reward structures.

Overall, the interview findings complement the quantitative results by showing that while reward and recognition practices are generally well-established in casual dining restaurants, job satisfaction is shaped by how consistently, fairly, and meaningfully these practices are implemented. Strengthening alignment between performance and rewards, improving consistency in recognition, and enhancing both financial and non-financial incentives can further promote satisfaction, motivation, and organizational effectiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study indicate that managers, supervisors, and staff in casual dining restaurants in Metro Manila generally perceive reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction as highly favorable. Reward and recognition practices are particularly well-established in terms of regular acknowledgment of work efforts, timely recognition, and equitable access to rewards, while job satisfaction is strongly associated with positive workplace relationships, meaningful job roles, and supportive supervision. These results demonstrate that casual dining organizations have implemented systems that effectively promote employee motivation, engagement, and overall satisfaction.

The study further revealed that perceptions of reward and recognition practices are consistent across organizational levels, suggesting fairness, inclusivity, and transparency in their implementation. Correlation analyses confirmed a statistically significant but moderate relationship between reward and recognition practices and job satisfaction, indicating that while these practices are important, they are not the sole determinants of employee satisfaction. The findings suggest that reward systems explain only a portion of job satisfaction, with a substantial influence coming from other factors such as workplace relationships, supervisory support, and cultural values. This highlights the importance of integrating formal reward mechanisms with social and organizational dynamics to achieve a more comprehensive and sustainable impact on employee well-being.

Despite these generally positive outcomes, minor challenges were identified, including concerns related to compensation, alignment of rewards with individual performance, and consistency in recognition practices, with supervisors reporting slightly higher exposure to these issues. The results reveal that while current practices are effective, refinement is needed to ensure greater consistency, fairness, and responsiveness to employee expectations.

Additionally, thematic analysis of interviews revealed that job satisfaction is influenced not only by formal reward systems but also by interpersonal relationships, cultural values, and working conditions. Filipino cultural principles such as pakikisama and utang na loob, along with supportive supervision and teamwork, play a crucial role in reinforcing motivation and engagement.

The study also suggests that traditional recognition approaches may not fully meet the expectations of a modern workforce, particularly younger employees. In fast-paced hospitality environments, recognition must be immediate, authentic, and relevant to sustain motivation. Therefore, the long-term effectiveness of reward and recognition systems depends on their adaptability, cultural alignment, and integration with broader organizational practices that support employee well-being, satisfaction, and retention.

In summary, while reward and recognition practices in Metro Manila's casual dining sector positively contribute to job satisfaction, maximizing their impact requires continuous improvement, alignment with performance, and responsiveness to both organizational and cultural contexts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Organizations may develop clear, measurable, and well-communicated performance standards that directly link rewards to individual contributions. Transparent criteria reduce perceptions of inequity, foster trust in the reward system, and enhance employee motivation.
2. Organizations may adopt mobile-based platforms, instant “spot” rewards, or recognition apps to provide prompt acknowledgment of employee performance. Leveraging technology enhances the immediacy, visibility, and consistency of recognition, particularly in fast-paced casual dining environments.
3. Organizations may implement a combination of monetary and non-monetary rewards to address diverse employee motivations. While financial incentives remain important, non-monetary recognition such as certificates, career development opportunities, or flexible scheduling strengthens intrinsic motivation and reinforces a culture of appreciation.
4. Organizations may implement supervisory training programs to enhance consistency, fairness, and effectiveness in delivering recognition. Managers and supervisors play a pivotal role in mediating employee perceptions of reward systems; equipping them with skills in feedback, coaching, and equitable recognition ensures acknowledgment is authentic, timely, and aligned with performance standards.
5. Organizations may conduct regular reviews and audits of reward and recognition practices to ensure alignment with organizational goals, employee expectations, and emerging workforce trends. Periodic assessments allow management to identify gaps, address inconsistencies, and update recognition mechanisms to maintain relevance and impact.
6. Organizations may cultivate a supportive culture emphasizing teamwork, mutual respect, and interpersonal recognition. Encouraging peer-to-peer acknowledgment, collaborative initiatives, and culturally sensitive practices (considering Filipino values such as pakikisama and utang na loob) reinforces motivation and job satisfaction.
7. Organizations may move beyond a sole focus on reward and recognition systems by integrating broader factors that influence job satisfaction, such as work-life balance, supportive leadership, team cohesion, and workplace culture. Addressing these “hidden drivers” can significantly enhance the overall effectiveness of reward systems and lead to more sustainable employee motivation and retention.
8. Future studies may explore additional factors influencing job satisfaction beyond reward and recognition, such as work-life balance, career growth opportunities, and organizational climate. Incorporating these

variables can provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee engagement and inform holistic human resource strategies in the hospitality sector.

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