

Organizational Climate and Employee Engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>The study examined the effect of organizational climate on employee engagement at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital in Cross River State, Nigeria. It specifically investigated the impact of reward systems and autonomy on employee engagement. The study was based on Social Exchange Theory. A survey research design was used, and a sample of 341 was drawn from a population of 2,940 clinical and non-clinical staff at the hospital, using the Krejcie and Morgan table to determine the sample size. Data were collected through a questionnaire. The data were analyzed and summarized using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, and the hypotheses were tested using inferential statistics such as simple and multiple regression analysis. The findings revealed that reward systems and autonomy, both individually and jointly have a statistically significant positive impact on employee engagement. The study concluded that both reward systems and autonomy are significant predictors of employee engagement at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital. Consequently, it is recommended that the hospital enhance its reward system by providing both monetary and non-monetary rewards; boost employee autonomy by granting employees greater control over their work; and combine rewards and autonomy by creating plans that acknowledge accomplishments while permitting flexibility in how employees complete their tasks, ensuring optimal engagement and productivity.</i></p> <p>Keywords: Organizational Climate, Reward Systems, Autonomy, Employee Engagement.</p>
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<p>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p> <p>Citation: Ededem Asuakak Edem, PhD; Roseline Friday Inyang & Godwin Francis Elijah. (2026). Organizational Climate and Employee Engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria. UKR Journal of Economics, Business and Management (UKRJEBM), 2(4), 01-11.</p>	

1. Introduction

In contemporary and increasingly competitive organizational environments, the quality of the work environment has become a critical determinant of employee attitudes, behaviors, and overall performance. Central to this environment is the concept of organizational climate, which refers to employees' shared perceptions of organizational policies, practices, and procedures. These perceptions encompass key elements such as leadership styles, communication patterns, reward systems, support structures, and workplace culture (Agarwal, 2015). Organizational climate therefore provides a framework through which employees interpret their work experiences and respond to organizational conditions.

Research indicates that organizational climate plays a significant role in shaping employee engagement. A positive organizational climate, characterized by trust, fairness, support, and open communication, fosters

psychological safety and encourages employees to invest cognitively, emotionally, and physically in their work roles (Bhattacharya, 2023; Alshammery & Ali, 2024). Conversely, a negative organizational climate, marked by inequities, inadequate support, and poor communication, is associated with disengagement, low morale, and reduced productivity (Hussainy *et al.*, 2025). These contrasting outcomes highlight the importance of cultivating a supportive and enabling work environment.

Within this broader framework, specific dimensions of organizational climate, particularly reward systems and autonomy, are especially influential in shaping employee engagement. A fair, transparent, and consistent reward system that recognizes employee contributions enhances motivation, reinforces desired behaviors, and builds trust in management (Herrera & De Las Heras-Rosas, 2021; Laundon *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, autonomy, defined as the

degree of discretion and independence employees have in carrying out their tasks, has been shown to significantly influence job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation, and organizational commitment (Langfred, 2013; Khoshnaw & Alavi, 2020). Collectively, these dimensions reflect an organizational climate that supports employee wellbeing and promotes active engagement.

The relevance of organizational climate is particularly pronounced in healthcare institutions, where employees operate under conditions of high workload, emotional strain, and critical service expectations. In such settings, a supportive organizational climate is essential for enhancing resilience, improving job satisfaction, and ensuring the delivery of high quality patient care (Mohr *et al.*, 2013; Alshammary and Ali, 2024). Healthcare environments like the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital UCTH are particularly sensitive to these dynamics. Existing evidence suggests that effective reward systems and a culture of autonomy are key to improving employee perceptions and organizational outcomes in healthcare settings (Abdulkareem *et al.*, 2025; Judi *et al.*, 2025).

Despite the recognized importance of these factors, many public tertiary healthcare institutions in Nigeria continue to face persistent organizational challenges. These include inequitable reward structures, limited employee autonomy, inadequate managerial support, and declining levels of employee morale (Bakare-Aremu *et al.*, 2021, Fowowe *et al.*, 2021). Such conditions often contribute to reduced employee engagement, increased burnout, and compromised service delivery. At the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital UCTH, similar concerns appear to exist, with indications that employees may experience limitations in both reward system and decision-making autonomy.

In light of these considerations, this study seeks to examine the effect of organizational climate, specifically the dimensions of reward systems and autonomy, on employee engagement at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Employee engagement is critical to organizational effectiveness, especially in healthcare settings where employees' commitment and motivation have a direct impact on service quality and patient outcomes. In teaching hospitals such as the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital (UCTH), sustained employee engagement is vital for optimal healthcare delivery, training, and research. However, organisational climate has a significant impact on engagement levels, particularly dimensions such as reward systems and autonomy.

Evidence from public healthcare organizations highlights persistent challenges that result in low morale, decreased

commitment, increased absenteeism, and subpar performance. These issues include insufficient rewards, delayed promotions, and limited autonomy because of inflexible bureaucratic structures (Adeloye *et al.*, 2017; Akinwale & George, 2023; Agwu *et al.*, 2024). Although earlier studies have examined the relationship between employee engagement and organizational climate, the majority of these studies either treat organizational climate as a unidimensional construct or concentrate on non-healthcare contexts. This study aims to close this gap by investigating how reward and autonomy, two key dimensions of organisational climate, influence employee engagement at UCTH.

1.2 Objective of the Study

The primary objective of the study was to investigate the influence of organisational climate on employee engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specific objectives were to:

- i. examine the effect of reward system on employee engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria.
- ii. assess the influence of autonomy on employee engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria.
- iii. investigate the joint influence of reward and autonomy on employee engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria.

1.3 Hypotheses of the study

- H₀₁:** There is no significant influence of reward system on employee engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria.
- H₀₂:** Autonomy does not significantly influence employee engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria.
- H₀₃:** The combined effects of reward system and autonomy do not significantly impact employee engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Review

The concept and construct of this study are explained in this section

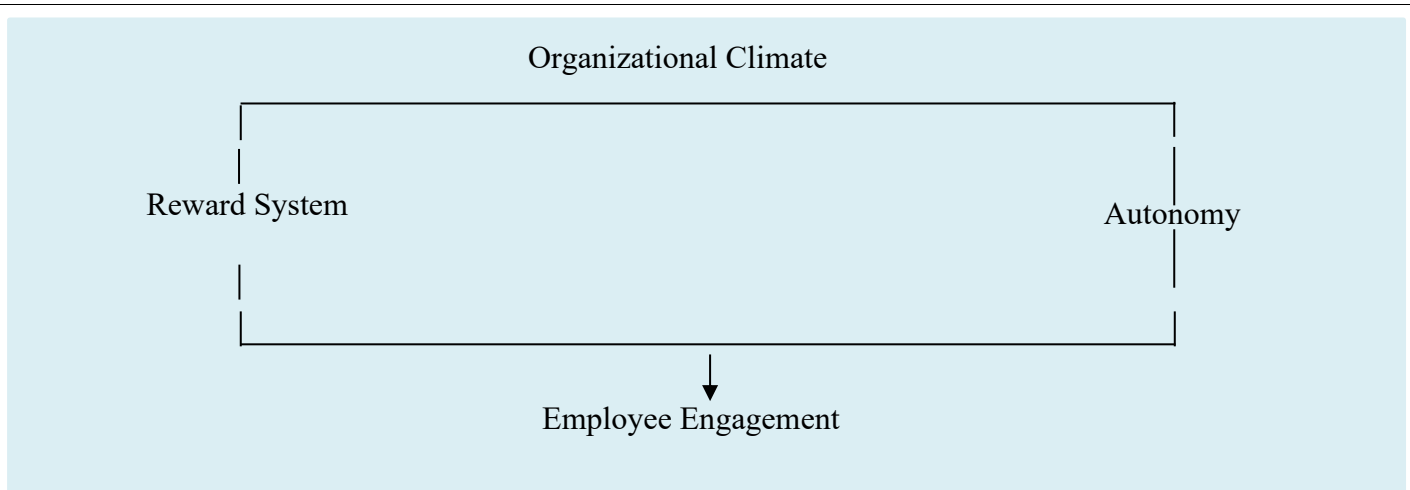


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Model indicating the relationship between Organizational Climate and Employee Engagement.

Figure 2.1 shows the conceptual model illustrating the relationship between organisational climate and employee engagement at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, focusing on two key dimensions: reward system and autonomy. In the model, organisational climate is the overarching independent construct. It depicts the typical work environment and conditions encountered by employees. This broad construct is operationalized through two specific components: reward system and autonomy, which serve as the study's primary explanatory variables. In addition to their individual effects, the model captures the combined impact of the reward system and autonomy on employee engagement. This suggests that the combination of a supportive reward structure and high autonomy may have a greater impact on engagement than either factor alone.

Overall, the model suggests that a positive organizational climate characterized by effective rewards and increased autonomy will significantly improve employee engagement in the hospital.

2.1.1 Organisational Climate

Organizational climate refers to collectively held opinions, attitudes, and affective responses that employees have regarding their workplace, including its social and psychological aspects. These aspects include decision-making processes, communication styles, leadership philosophies, and the presence of formal and informal support networks (Hussainy, 2022). Research indicates that a positive workplace environment is linked to higher levels of employee motivation, job satisfaction, teamwork, and overall performance, while a negative environment is linked to higher levels of stress, lower morale, and turnover (Bhattacharya, 2023; Hussainy *et al.*, 2025).

The organizational climate is influenced by a combination of formal organizational policies, informal norms, and the behavioral actions of both management and peers, reflecting the interaction of structural and relational factors

(Mouro & Duarte, 2021). A systematic assessment of organizational climate allows leaders to identify problem areas and implement targeted interventions, thereby increasing employee engagement and overall organizational effectiveness (Kumar *et al.*, 2023).

2.1.2 Reward system

Reward systems are essential instruments for praising and rewarding worker contributions and performance. They consist of both monetary incentives like salaries, bonuses, and benefits, as well as non-monetary incentives like opportunities for professional growth, recognition, and promotions. These components satisfy professional and psychological needs (Abdulkareem *et al.*, 2025). In line with organizational goals, effective reward management links individual performance to broader objectives. Well-designed reward programs increase engagement, retention, and job satisfaction while also boosting motivation and encouraging desired behaviors. Since perceived injustice can erode commitment and trust, fairness, transparency, and consistency are crucial (Adams, 2025). A strategic approach that incorporates organizational values, balances intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and fosters employee aspirations results in high performance and a positive work environment. Thus, reward systems are essential in contemporary human resource management.

2.1.3 Autonomy

Employee autonomy is widely acknowledged in management literature as a key factor influencing employee motivation, engagement, and performance. It refers to an individual's level of discretion in carrying out their responsibilities. Employee autonomy enables them to make decisions, manage their time, and solve problems creatively (Mworia *et al.*, 2021). Research highlights that increased autonomy is associated with higher organizational commitment, intrinsic motivation, and job satisfaction (Khoshnaw & Alavi, 2020; Langfred, 2013).

Furthermore, organizations that promote autonomy frequently see increased innovation and productivity as long as clear goals, adequate resources, and supportive structures are maintained (van Essen, 2025). Thus, encouraging autonomy is a strategic approach for striking a balance between organizational goals and personal empowerment.

2.1.4 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is widely acknowledged as a multifaceted concept that includes employees' emotional, cognitive, and behavioral investments in their jobs and organizations. Employees who are engaged demonstrate increased motivation, persistence, and discretionary effort, which leads to better job performance (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). Meaningful work, supportive and effective leadership, transparent communication, recognition practices, and opportunities for learning and career development are all believed to promote engagement (Lysova *et al.*, 2019; Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019). When employees perceive strong organizational support, they develop psychological ownership and a stronger organizational commitment. Employee engagement is therefore a key factor in long-term organizational effectiveness and competitive advantage since high levels of engagement are regularly associated with decreased intentions to leave, enhanced teamwork, and higher customer satisfaction (Sundaray, 2011)

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

This study is based on Social Exchange Theory (SET), which was originally developed by Blau in 1964. The theory asserts that long-term relationships are driven by justice and trust, and that human interactions are founded on reciprocal exchanges of material and intangible resources. SET explains how employees' views of fairness, support, and recognition affect their attitudes and behaviors in the workplace. Fairness, trust, and encouraging actions create a positive workplace environment that gives workers a sense of worth and psychological security (Shariq & Siddiqui, 2023). In response, workers show emotional and mental commitment to their jobs and the company by becoming more involved (Shariq & Siddiqui, 2023).

According to SET theory, organizations can promote employee participation and establish a mutually beneficial cycle by investing in equitable policies, growth opportunities, and recognition (Mohiya, 2025). As a result, SET offers a strong lens through which to view how organizational climate affects employee engagement through reciprocal social interactions, enhancing loyalty, productivity, and overall job satisfaction

2.3 Empirical Review

Fayaz and Gulzar (2025) examined the impact of organisational climate on work–life balance (WLB) among female university employees in Jammu and Kashmir, emphasising the mediating function of self-efficacy. The study employed a cross-sectional survey approach, sampling female personnel from 11 universities in the region. The results showed that important aspects of the organisational climate, such as autonomy, integration, involvement, support, training, and welfare, had a big positive effect on employees' work-life balance. Moreover, self-efficacy was identified as a partial mediator in the association between organisational climate and work-life balance, underscoring its critical function in augmenting individuals' ability to adeptly navigate both professional obligations and personal commitments. The authors determined that an organisational climate characterised by these traits is essential for enhancing work–life balance among female employees. As a result, they suggested that specific professional development programs be put in place to help women gain more confidence and skills so they may better handle the demands of both work and family life.

In a similar vein, Alshammary and Ali (2024) used empirical data from the Hail Health Cluster to investigate how organizational climate affects medical staff performance. The study's objectives were to look at how organizational climate and employee performance are related, evaluate how knowledge transfer and employee performance are related, and look into how technology influences these relationships used a cross-sectional approach in the study. According to their findings, organizational climate improves knowledge transfer activities and has a positive and significant impact on employee collaboration. Furthermore, it was discovered that employee performance was positively and significantly impacted by knowledge transfer. The results also showed that the use of technology has a significant moderating effect by enhancing the relationship between employee performance and knowledge transfer as well as between organizational climate and knowledge transfer. The study concluded that technology play a crucial role in enhancing worker performance in the Hail Health Cluster since it promotes a positive workplace environment and makes knowledge transfer easier. Based on these results, the study recommended that in order to maintain and improve employee performance and service quality, the Hail Health Cluster should keep investing in and growing integrated technology systems that facilitate communication, training, and knowledge sharing across all departments.

Mworia *et al.* (2021) investigated the impact of job autonomy on employee performance in the Isiolo County Government in a different study. The study used a mixed

methods approach and a descriptive research design. The findings showed that among county government employees, job autonomy and performance were significantly correlated. The study concluded that job autonomy significantly affects employee performance and advised public sector human resource managers to improve job autonomy by giving workers more control over their duties and responsibilities.

In a comparable study, Abdulkareem et al. (2025) investigated the correlation between employee motivation and service quality at Maitama General Hospital utilising a survey-based methodology. The results showed that external rewards, especially money, made employees much happier with their jobs and better at providing services, which in turn raised their overall morale. It was also shown that intrinsic rewards had a big effect on both satisfaction and performance outcomes. Moreover, possibilities for professional growth demonstrated an enhancement of employee competency, highlighting the significance of training in improving skill proficiency. The study found that a compensation system that includes financial incentives, intrinsic recognition, and ongoing skill development is necessary to boost both employee morale and service quality. So, it suggested that hospital administration regularly assess and improve pay scales, bonuses, and benefits packages to stay competitive and keep personnel motivated. The study also stressed the need for regular monitoring of reward systems using employee feedback to make sure they meet both staff expectations and organisational goals.

3. Methodology

The study utilised a survey research approach to enable systematic and efficient data collection inside the hospital setting, focusing on a population of 2,940 clinical and non-clinical workers at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital. The Krejcie and Morgan table was used to find a sample size of about 341 respondents with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error. We used a structured questionnaire based on a modified five-point

Likert scale to collect data. The scale went from 5 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree). Content and construct validation were used to prove that the instrument was valid. The test-retest procedure and a Cronbach's alpha coefficient above 0.7 were used to prove that it was reliable, which means that it had good internal consistency. Simple random selection was used to choose respondents so that they would be represented. The gathered data were scrutinised by both simple and multiple regression methods to evaluate the study's hypotheses and investigate the interrelationships among variables, while an empirical model was developed to fulfil the three research objectives and their associated hypotheses.

3.1 Empirical Model Specification

$$EE = f(RS) + \mu \dots\dots\dots (1)$$

$$EE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RS + \mu_1 \dots\dots\dots (2)$$

$$EE = f(A) + \mu_1 \dots\dots\dots (3)$$

$$EE = \beta_0 + \beta_2 A + \mu_1 \dots\dots\dots (4)$$

$$EE = f(RS, A) + \mu_1 \dots\dots\dots (5)$$

$$EE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 RS + \beta_2 A + \mu_1 \dots\dots\dots (6)$$

Where:

EE = Employee Engagement

RS = Reward System

A = Autonomy

β_0 = Intercept or regression constant

$\beta_1 - \beta_2$ = Regression coefficients

μ_1 = Error term

4. Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

The analysis was based on the 95.3% response rate obtained from the distribution of 341 questionnaires, of which 325 were successfully returned.

4.1 Statistical Analysis of Data

Table 4.1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reward System	245	1.40	5.00	3.8629	.77489
Autonomy	245	1.20	5.00	3.8522	.80829
Emp_Engagement	245	1.50	5.00	3.8882	.74365
Valid N (listwise)	245				

Table 4.1 shows the descriptive statistics for the study variables. Participants (N = 245) indicated moderate to high levels of reward system (M = 3.86, SD = 0.77), autonomy (M = 3.85, SD = 0.81), and employee engagement (M = 3.89, SD = 0.74),

with average values ranging from 1.20 to 5.00 across variables. Overall, these findings indicate that the sample generally perceived positive work conditions and levels of engagement.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: There is no significant influence of reward on employee engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria.

$$EE = f(RS) + \mu$$

Table 4.2: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.956 ^a	.914	.914	.21819	1.798

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reward

b. Dependent Variable: Emp_Engagement

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	123.367	1	123.367	2591.294	.000 ^b
	Residual	11.569	319	.048		
	Total	134.936	320			

a. Dependent Variable: Emp_Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Reward

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.344	.071		4.837	.000
	Reward System	.918	.018	.956	50.905	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Emp_Engagement

Table 4.2 presents the regression analysis examining the influence of reward systems on employee engagement. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.914$) indicates that reward systems explain 91.4% of the variance in employee engagement, demonstrating a very strong explanatory power. The ANOVA results ($F = 2591.294$, $p < 0.05$) confirm that the regression model is statistically significant and reliably predicts employee engagement. Moreover, the unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.918$) suggests that, holding other variables constant, a one-unit increase in the reward system leads to a corresponding 0.918-unit increase in employee engagement. The standardized coefficient ($Beta = 0.956$) further underscores the strong predictive strength of reward systems. The constant term ($B = 0.344$, $p < 0.05$) implies that a baseline level of employee engagement exists even in the absence of reward-related factors. Given that the p-value is below the 0.05 threshold, the null hypothesis is rejected, leading to the conclusion that reward systems exert a statistically significant and positive effect on employee engagement, thereby serving as a critical determinant of engagement within the organization.

H₀₂: Autonomy does not significantly influence employee engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria.

$$EE = f(A) + \mu_1$$

Table 4.3: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.908 ^a	.824	.824	.31242	1.238

a. Predictors: (Constant), Autonomy

b. Dependent Variable: Emp_Engagement

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	111.218	1	111.218	1139.458	.000 ^b
	Residual	23.718	243	.098		
	Total	134.936	244			

a. Dependent Variable: Emp_Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Autonomy

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.670	.097		6.885	.000
	Autonomy	.835	.025	.908	33.756	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Emp_Engagement

Table 4.3 summarizes the regression analysis assessing the effect of autonomy on employee engagement. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.824$) indicates that autonomy explains 82.4% of the variation in employee engagement, reflecting a substantial level of explanatory power. The ANOVA results ($F = 1139.458$, $p < 0.05$) confirm that the model is statistically significant and provides a reliable prediction of employee engagement. The unstandardized regression coefficient ($B = 0.835$, $p < 0.05$) shows that a one-unit increase in autonomy leads to a 0.835-unit increase in employee engagement, holding other factors constant. Additionally, the standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.908) demonstrates that autonomy is a strong predictor of engagement. The constant term ($B = 0.670$, $p < 0.05$) suggests that a positive level of employee engagement exists even in the absence of autonomy. Given that the p-value is below the 0.05 significance threshold, the null hypothesis is rejected. Accordingly, the study concludes that autonomy exerts a statistically significant and positive influence on employee engagement, underscoring the critical role of individual discretion and decision-making authority in enhancing engagement levels within organizations.

H03: The combined effects of reward and autonomy do not significantly impact employee engagement in the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria

$$EE = f(RS,A) + \mu_1$$

Table 4.4: Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.980 ^a	.960	.959	.14975	1.218

a. Predictors: (Constant), Reward, Autonomy

b. Dependent Variable: Emp_Engagement

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	129.509	2	64.755	2887.780	.000 ^b
	Residual	5.427	242	.022		
	Total	134.936	244			

a. Dependent Variable: Emp_Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Reward, Autonomy

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.158	.050		3.157	.002
	Autonomy	.345	.021	.375	16.551	.000
	Reward system	.621	.022	.648	28.561	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Emp_Engagement

Table 4.4 presents the model summary for the multiple regression of reward system and autonomy on employee engagement. The coefficient of determination (adjusted $R^2 = 0.959$) indicate that reward system and autonomy account for 95.9% of employee engagement. The regression model accurately predicts hospital employee engagement, as evidenced by ANOVA results ($F = 2887.780$, $p < 0.001$). The results of the standardized model show that reward ($\beta = 0.648$) has a higher impact on employee engagement than autonomy ($\beta = 0.375$). The positive beta values indicate that increases in reward and autonomy lead to corresponding increases in employee engagement. The null hypothesis is rejected since both predictors have p-values less than 0.05. The study concluded that employee engagement at the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria, is significantly and positively impacted by both autonomy and reward, with reward being the stronger predictor of engagement in this model.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

Findings of hypothesis one indicate a very strong relationship between the reward system and employee engagement. The high coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.914$) shows that rewards explain over 91% of the variance in engagement, highlighting their dominant role in influencing employee behavior. The findings of Hypothesis One show a very strong relationship between the reward

system and employee engagement. Rewards play a significant role in influencing employee behavior, as evidenced by their high coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.914$), explaining over 91% of the variance in engagement. Furthermore, the standardized coefficient (Beta = 0.956) demonstrates that the reward system is a stronger predictor of engagement than the other factors not captured in the model. These findings indicate that improving the reward system can have a significant and direct impact on boosting employee engagement. These results are consistent with the research of Abdulkareem *et al.* (2025), who discovered that financial incentives and other extrinsic rewards had a positive impact on employee performance and job satisfaction at Maitama General Hospital, highlighting the positive effects of rewards on morale. Similarly, Fayaz and Gulzar (2025) found that while organizational policies like training and welfare programs enhance employees' ability to handle professional responsibilities, reward-related initiatives empower workers and boost engagement. Additionally, Alshammary and Ali (2024) demonstrated that a positive organizational climate, effective knowledge transfer, and technical assistance strengthen employee performance; this suggests that adding rewards within supportive work settings further increases. Collectively, these findings reinforce the idea that an effective reward system is a crucial determinant of employee engagement

and the overall performance of the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital, Cross River State, Nigeria

The findings of hypothesis two show that employee engagement is significantly influenced by autonomy. Autonomy accounts for a significant majority (82.4%) of the variation in engagement levels, with an R^2 of 0.824, suggesting that employees' sense of autonomy and control at work significantly influences their level of engagement. This is further supported by the high standardized Beta value of 0.908, which shows that autonomy has one of the biggest effects on engagement among possible predictors. These findings are consistent with the findings of Mworira *et al.* (2021), who found a significant positive correlation between job autonomy and employee performance in the County Government of Isiolo. This suggests that greater control over job tasks promotes overall performance and employee effectiveness. In a similar vein, Fayaz and Gulzar (2025) found that women employees' work-life balance is positively impacted by autonomy within the workplace, implying that workplace independence increases overall engagement and satisfaction. Additionally, Alshammary and Ali (2024) demonstrated that fostering autonomy and other positive organizational cultures enhanced collaboration and knowledge transfer, which in turn enhanced worker engagement and productivity. Collectively, these studies demonstrate the significance of autonomy in raising employee engagement and organizational efficacy.

The findings of hypothesis three demonstrates that reward and autonomy have a significant impact on employee engagement, with a high adjusted R^2 of 0.959. These two factors account for approximately 96% of the variation in employee engagement, demonstrating their importance in the workplace. The standardized coefficients indicate that reward ($\beta = 0.648$) has a greater effect than autonomy ($\beta = 0.375$). Previous research confirms these findings. Abdulkareem *et al.* (2025) found that both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards increased employee satisfaction and service quality significantly at Maitama General Hospital. Mworira *et al.* (2021) found that job autonomy improved employee performance in the Isiolo County Government. Furthermore, Fayaz and Gulzar (2025) discovered that autonomy in a supportive organizational climate improved employees' ability to successfully balance professional and personal responsibilities. These studies confirm that giving employees autonomy significantly increases their level of engagement.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study found that both reward systems and autonomy are significant predictors of staff engagement at the

University of Calabar Teaching Hospital. While each factor contributes to engagement, their combined effect is extremely significant, with rewards emerging as the most powerful influence. These findings show how a targeted reward system and autonomy promotion can greatly increase employee commitment, satisfaction, and performance, highlighting the crucial relationship between organizational climate and employee engagement at the hospital.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. To motivate and engage employees, the University of Calabar Teaching Hospital should improve its reward system by offering both financial and non-financial incentives, such as performance bonuses, recognition programs, and career development opportunities.
- ii. The University of Calabar Teaching Hospital should promote employee autonomy by giving employees more control over their tasks, schedules, and decision-making processes, fostering a sense of trust, responsibility, and increased commitment.
- iii. The University of Calabar Teaching Hospital should combine rewards and autonomy by developing strategies that recognize achievements while also allowing flexibility in how employees complete their work, ensuring maximum engagement and productivity.

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