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Effect of Employee Motivation Strategies on Organizational Performance: A Case of Rwandair Ltd

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Abstract: *This study evaluated the impact of employee motivation strategies incentives, work environment, and recognition on organizational performance at RwandAir Ltd., grounded in Reinforcement and Job Demands–Resources theories. A descriptive and correlational mixed-methods approach was used, surveying 244 employees (from a population of 625 selected via Yamane's formula) and interviewing management staff. Quantitative data were analyzed via descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression, while qualitative feedback was analyzed thematically. Respondents reported high mean scores for incentives (4.15), work environment (4.37), recognition (4.19), and overall performance (4.13). Correlation analyses revealed strong positive links between performance and incentives ($r = .794$), work environment ($r = .706$), and recognition ($r = .670$), all at $p < .01$. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(3, 242) = 179.500$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .747$, showing that these three strategies jointly explained 74.7% of the variance in organizational performance. Employee incentives ($\beta = .593$, $p < .001$) and recognition ($\beta = .381$, $p < .001$) emerged as significant positive predictors, whereas work environment had a positive but non-significant effect ($\beta = .030$, $p = .655$). The study concludes that RwandAir should prioritize fair, performance-linked incentives and robust recognition systems while sustaining supportive working conditions.*

Keywords: *Employee motivation, Employee incentives, Work environment, Employee recognition, organizational performance, RwandAir Ltd*

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1. Introduction

Employee motivation has become an important concern in organizational management because organizations depend on employees to translate strategies, resources, technology, and operational systems into actual performance. Research has consistently demonstrated that motivational mechanisms can influence employee performance, while meta-analytic evidence indicates that both intrinsic motivation and extrinsic incentives can contribute to performance outcomes (Cerasoli et al., 2014; Condly et al., 2003). In service organizations, the relationship is especially visible because employees interact directly with customers and because service quality depends substantially on employee motivation, engagement, and behavior. Evidence from the airline industry, for example, shows that prosocial motivation can contribute to high-quality service among airline employees (Ho & Wu, 2019). The study underlying this manuscript therefore positions employee motivation as a central organizational resource and examines it through three practical dimensions: employee incentives, work environment, and employee recognition.

These dimensions represent complementary mechanisms through which management can encourage desired behavior, support employees in demanding jobs, and communicate that employee contributions are valued (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Stajkovic & Luthans, 2003). At the global level, the literature reviewed in the study indicates that organizations increasingly view motivation as broader than direct financial compensation. Contemporary motivation practices include performance-based rewards, employee welfare, supportive supervision, recognition, professional development, communication, teamwork, and opportunities for growth. Research suggests that incentives and intrinsic motivation can jointly predict employee performance, although their effects may differ according to the nature of the performance being considered (Cerasoli et al., 2014). Similarly, meta-analytic evidence indicates that incentive systems can produce meaningful improvements in workplace performance when appropriately designed and implemented (Condly et al., 2003). Recognition is also an important motivational mechanism; experimental evidence indicates that public recognition can increase subsequent employee performance (Bradler et al., 2016). Such practices are expected to strengthen commitment, satisfaction, discretionary effort, and retention, particularly where employees perceive that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Kurtessis et al., 2017; Riggle et al., 2009). In the aviation industry, these outcomes are strategically important because operational reliability and service quality depend on coordinated employee performance. Research among airline employees has similarly shown that job design and prosocial motivation can influence high-quality service (Ho & Wu, 2019). The literature therefore provides a strong rationale for examining motivation strategies within an airline rather than assuming that findings from general corporate settings automatically apply to aviation.

The African context adds further importance to the issue. Organizations often operate under resource constraints and diverse workforce expectations, making the design of motivation systems a balance between material and non-material rewards. Evidence from Kenya, for instance, has reported positive relationships between rewards, incentives, work environment, employee development, and organizational performance (Jepngetich & Omondi, 2025). Similarly, research in Nigeria found that both monetary and non-monetary motivational incentives were positively associated with employee job performance (Alase & Akinbo, 2021). Evidence from Mozambique also indicates that financial incentives, supportive work environments, teamwork, supervision, and recognition can reinforce employee motivation and performance-related outcomes (Witter et al., 2019). However, the effectiveness of any particular strategy may depend on organizational culture, leadership practices, available resources, and the nature of work. These contextual factors make organization-specific evidence valuable rather than assuming that motivation strategies have identical effects across sectors and institutional settings. Within Rwanda, employee motivation has increasingly been examined in relation to employee and organizational performance. Studies conducted in Rwandan organizations have reported positive relationships between incentives, rewards, recognition, and employee performance. For example, research in selected public institutions in Rwanda found that incentives and rewards were positively associated with employee performance and that recognition schemes also had a significant relationship with performance (Chrissy et al., 2022).

Similarly, a study of Rwanda Housing Authority reported positive relationships between compensation, recognition, career development, employee benefits, and employee performance (Kampororo et al., 2021). Research conducted in the Rwandan private sector has likewise reported a significant relationship between incentive practices and employee performance (Umutoni & Singh, 2022). The importance of service-sector employment in Rwanda further strengthens the relevance of employee motivation: the National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda reported that services accounted for 42.6% of employment in the fourth quarter of 2024, making the quality and performance of service-sector employees an important component of the country's labour market (NISR, 2025). RwandAir Ltd operates in a demanding and competitive industry in which employees are expected to maintain high service standards while complying with safety, operational, and customer-service requirements. The airline context is particularly relevant because employees' interactions with passengers and their ability to deliver consistent service can directly affect customer experiences and organizational outcomes. Research in the aviation sector has identified organizational support, working conditions, and intrinsic motivation as important factors associated with employee outcomes and service-related performance (Ho & Wu, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2021). The study therefore considers concerns such as workload pressure, career progression, recognition, and communication as issues that can influence employee morale and performance. It focuses specifically on whether employee incentives, work environment, and employee recognition are associated with measurable organizational performance rather than treating motivation as a general concept.

The research problem is grounded in a contextual evidence gap. Although previous studies have reported positive relationships between employee motivation and performance, much of the evidence reviewed in the dissertation comes from sectors or countries outside Rwanda's aviation environment. Existing Rwandan studies have examined motivation and performance in public institutions, housing, and private-sector organizations, but these findings cannot automatically be generalized to the aviation sector because organizational environments, job demands, service requirements, and performance expectations differ across industries (Chrissy et al., 2022; Kampororo et al., 2021; Umutoni & Singh, 2022). Moreover, studies frequently examine incentives, recognition, working conditions, or other motivational practices separately. There has been comparatively limited evidence on their combined contribution to organizational performance at RwandAir Ltd. This study addresses that gap by examining three motivation dimensions simultaneously and by integrating descriptive evidence with correlation and multiple regression analysis. The study is consequently important for both scholarship and practice. From a scholarly perspective, it contributes context-specific evidence on motivation and organizational performance in the Rwandan aviation sector. From a managerial perspective, it helps distinguish between motivation strategies that are strongly associated with performance and those that may operate mainly as supportive conditions. The inferential results are particularly useful because they move beyond respondents' general agreement and estimate the relative contribution of each predictor when the three strategies are considered together. Such an approach is consistent with evidence showing that multiple motivational mechanisms can operate simultaneously and that combinations of financial, social, and feedback-based reinforcers may have stronger effects than isolated motivational practices (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2003; Cerasoli et al., 2014).

1.1 Objectives of the study were

1.1.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to assess the effect of employee motivation strategies on organizational performance at RwandAir Ltd.

1.1.2 Specific Objectives

1. To assess the effect of employee incentives on organizational performance at RwandAir Ltd.
2. To assess the effect of the working environment on organizational performance at RwandAir Ltd.
3. To assess the effect of employee recognition on organizational performance at RwandAir Ltd.

1.2 Hypotheses of the study

H01: Employee incentives have no significant effect on organizational performance at RwandAir Ltd.
H02: Working environment has no significant effect on organizational performance at RwandAir Ltd.
H03: Employee recognition has no significant effect on organizational performance at RwandAir Ltd.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Employee motivation strategies

Employee motivation strategies are deliberate organizational practices intended to encourage employees to perform their responsibilities with commitment, satisfaction, and enthusiasm. In the RwandAir context, motivation is understood as a management process rather than a single intervention. Incentives provide material and non-material inducements; the work environment provides resources and conditions that enable employees to perform; and recognition communicates appreciation for effort and achievement. The combination is important because employees may respond not only to what they receive, but also to whether they have the resources to perform and whether their contributions are noticed. The literature reviewed in the study associates motivation with productivity, employee engagement, customer satisfaction, retention, and organizational resilience. Saks (2021), Robinson et al. (2024), Macey and Schneider (2023), and Albrecht et al. (2025) are used in the source to support the argument that motivated employees are more likely to invest discretionary effort and align their behavior with organizational objectives. The implication for RwandAir is that motivation strategies should be adaptive and linked to operational realities, rather than implemented as isolated human resource activities.

2.1.2 Employee incentives

Employee incentives comprise monetary and non-monetary rewards designed to encourage desirable performance and strengthen commitment. Monetary incentives may include salaries, bonuses, allowances, and other financial benefits, while non-monetary incentives may include welfare programmes, career opportunities, additional leave, and other valued benefits. The conceptual argument is that incentives are most effective when employees perceive them as fair, transparent, timely, and meaningfully connected to performance. Armstrong (2021) and Milkovich et al. (2022) emphasize alignment between reward systems and organizational objectives, while Kuvaas (2019) and Luthans and Stajkovic (2020) associate incentive systems with engagement and performance. For an airline, incentive design may be particularly consequential because employees operate under demanding schedules and service expectations. Fair rewards can reinforce punctuality, customer orientation, teamwork, and sustained effort. At the same time, poorly perceived compensation can weaken trust even where the formal incentive package is substantial. The study therefore measures incentives through salary and allowances, performance-based bonuses, welfare benefits, timeliness and fairness of rewards, and commitment generated by the incentive system.

2.1.3 Working environment

The working environment refers to the physical, social, and psychological conditions in which employees perform their duties. The study conceptualizes it through workplace safety, access to tools and resources, teamwork and collaboration, work-life balance, and the extent to which the environment motivates employees. Bakker and Demerouti (2022) and Harter et al. (2022) support the broader proposition that work conditions influence employee engagement, well-being, satisfaction, and performance. In aviation, the work environment has distinctive operational significance. Employees require adequate equipment, secure workplaces, effective communication, and collaboration across departments. A supportive environment may reduce unnecessary strain and help employees respond to job demands. Nevertheless, a favorable environment does not automatically imply a strong independent statistical effect on organizational performance once stronger predictors are controlled. This distinction becomes important in interpreting the present study's regression results.

2.1.4 Employee recognition

Employee recognition involves formal or informal acknowledgment of employees' efforts, achievements, and contributions. It may include verbal praise, awards, certificates, public acknowledgment, performance feedback, and promotion opportunities. Recognition can influence performance by strengthening employees' sense of value, belonging, and purpose. Brun and Dugas (2008), Nelson and Quick (2020), and Armstrong (2021) support the proposition that appreciation can strengthen motivation, commitment, and retention. The study measures recognition through supervisory acknowledgment, regular feedback and appreciation, recognition programmes, clear systems for rewarding outstanding performance, and the effect of recognition on motivation and loyalty. Importantly, the source findings reveal a notable distinction between recognition in general and regular feedback specifically: respondents strongly agreed that their achievements were recognized, yet the item on regular feedback recorded a much lower mean and greater dispersion. This suggests that the organization may have a strong recognition culture in some respects while still needing greater consistency in day-to-day feedback.

2.1.5 Organizational performance

Organizational performance is the extent to which an organization achieves its objectives efficiently and effectively. The source study operationalizes performance through perceived achievement of operational goals, productivity and efficiency, employee satisfaction and commitment, the contribution of motivated employees, and the extent to which overall performance reflects motivation strategies. Bell (2021) and Ivanov and Smirnova (2020) emphasize that performance is multidimensional and may include financial and non-financial outcomes. For RwandAir, performance is particularly relevant to operational efficiency, service quality, customer satisfaction, employee retention, and achievement of organizational targets. The present study relies on employee perceptions rather than audited organizational indicators. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as evidence about perceived organizational performance and its statistical association with perceived motivation strategies, not as a direct causal estimate of financial or operational outcomes.

2.2 Theoretical Review

2.2.1 Reinforcement Theory

Reinforcement Theory, associated with Skinner (1953, 1957), explains how desirable consequences can encourage employees to repeat positive work behaviors. In organizations, incentives, rewards, and recognition can reinforce behaviors that contribute to improved performance (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2003). Performance-based bonuses, allowances, and recognition are therefore likely to motivate employees when they perceive a clear and fair connection between effort, performance, and valued outcomes (Condly et al., 2003). At RwandAir Ltd, the theory suggests that incentives should be clear, timely, fair, and linked to measurable performance outcomes, while recognition can reinforce valued employee contributions (Bradler et al., 2016). The significant effects of employee incentives and recognition observed in the study are therefore consistent with the expectations of Reinforcement Theory and demonstrate its relevance to understanding employee motivation and organizational performance in the RwandAir context.

2.2.2 Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Theory

JD–R Theory explains motivation through the balance between job demands and job resources (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Job demands include workload, time pressure, emotional strain, and other aspects that require sustained effort, while resources include supportive supervision, adequate tools, recognition, teamwork, and favorable working conditions (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2004). When resources help employees cope with demands and achieve work goals, engagement and performance can improve. When demands outweigh resources, strain and reduced performance may emerge (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The theory is especially appropriate for aviation because employees operate within tightly coordinated systems characterized by schedules, safety requirements, customer expectations, and operational pressure (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Ho & Wu, 2019). The high descriptive mean for access to tools and resources suggests that RwandAir employees generally perceive important resources to be available. Yet the non-significant regression coefficient for work environment indicates that these conditions, although positively related to performance, did not explain unique variance after incentives and recognition were included. This does not invalidate JD–R Theory; rather, it suggests that in this sample, the motivational contribution of resources may be expressed indirectly or overlap with stronger predictors (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Lesener et al., 2019).

2.3 Empirical Review

The empirical literature reviewed in the source dissertation generally reports positive associations between motivation strategies and organizational outcomes. Ivanov and Petrov (2023) found positive productivity effects associated with performance-based incentives, while Nguyen and Tran (2023) reported benefits from monetary and non-monetary rewards. Johnson and Miller (2024) similarly linked competitive compensation and recognition with satisfaction and operational efficiency. African evidence from Adeyemi et al. (2023), Kamau and Otieno (2023), and Nsubuga (2023) also indicates that incentives and supportive workplace practices can strengthen motivation and productivity. Evidence on work environment follows a similar general pattern. Studies reviewed in the dissertation associate safety, communication, teamwork, supportive management, and adequate resources with improved motivation and productivity. However, the present study contributes an important qualification: although work environment is strongly correlated with performance, its unique regression effect is statistically insignificant. This difference illustrates why correlational evidence alone is insufficient for identifying the strongest independent predictors.

Recognition has also been associated with productivity, commitment, retention, and service quality. Kozlov and Ivanov (2023), Chai and Boonmee (2023), Dubois and Lefevre (2024), and Adeyemi et al. (2023) are cited in the source study as evidence that structured recognition can improve performance-related outcomes. Rwandan evidence, including Niyonsenga et al. (2024), suggests that recognition and incentives can be important organizational resources. The present study extends this literature by estimating the relative contribution of recognition alongside incentives and work environment in the same regression model. The research gap is therefore not simply the absence of studies on motivation. Rather, the gap concerns context, integration, and comparative explanatory power. Much of the reviewed evidence is from outside Rwanda or outside aviation, while studies within Africa often focus on one motivation dimension. The present analysis addresses this gap by examining the three dimensions jointly at RwandAir and by combining descriptive perceptions, bivariate relationships, and multivariate prediction.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Independent variable: Employee Motivation Strategies

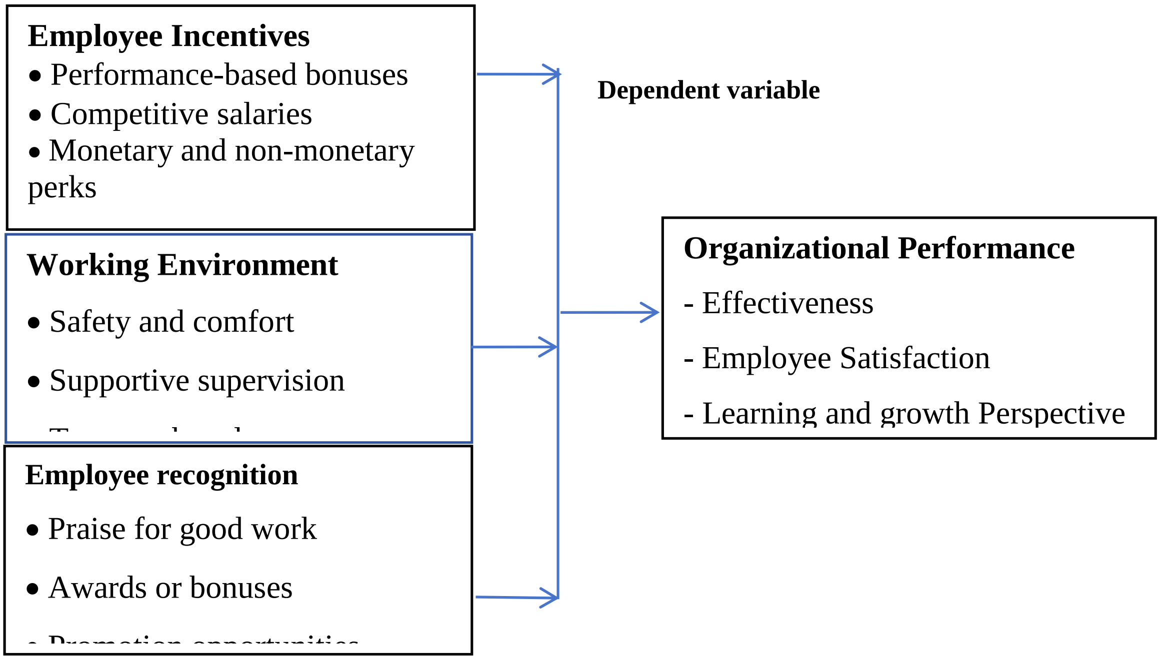

Figure 2. 1: Conceptual framework; Source: Researcher, 2026

3. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive and correlational research design within a mixed-methods approach. The descriptive component was used to summarize employees' perceptions of motivation strategies and organizational performance, while the correlational and regression components examined the direction, strength, and statistical significance of relationships among the study variables. This design was appropriate because the study sought to examine naturally occurring organizational practices without manipulating employee motivation conditions. The quantitative analysis provided measurable evidence, while qualitative interviews with management staff provided contextual explanations of the observed patterns.

The target population consisted of 625 RwandAir Ltd employees distributed across 20 departments and categorized as senior, middle, and lower staff. Senior staff numbered 81, middle staff 156, and lower staff 388. The sample size was determined using Yamane's formula at a 5% acceptable sampling error and 95% confidence level, resulting in 244 questionnaire respondents. Proportionate allocation produced 32 senior, 61 middle, and 151 lower-level respondents. Stratified sampling ensured representation of staff categories, while purposive sampling was used for participants with relevant management knowledge and simple random sampling was used among remaining employees. The study also obtained qualitative evidence from management interviews. Primary quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire measured employee incentives, work environment, employee recognition, and organizational performance. Semi-structured interviews were used with senior and middle management staff to obtain deeper explanations of motivation practices. Documentary review of organizational and related records was used to supplement primary evidence. The combination of questionnaire, interview, and documentary sources supported triangulation.

A pilot study involving 20 employees who were not part of the main sample was undertaken to assess clarity, structure, and comprehensiveness of the instruments. Content validity was addressed through expert review, and the source study reports use of a Content Validity Index, with .78 identified as the acceptable threshold. Reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha, with .70 or higher considered acceptable. The study also described test-retest assessment and examination of inter-item relationships to identify weak or inconsistent items. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive analysis used frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Pearson correlation was used to examine bivariate relationships between employee incentives, work environment, employee recognition, and organizational performance. Multiple regression analysis was then used to estimate the unique contribution of the three independent variables. The regression model was specified as $Y = \beta 0 + \beta 1X1 + \beta 2X2 + \beta 3X3 + \varepsilon$, where Y represents organizational performance, X1 employee incentives, X2 work environment, X3 employee recognition, and ε the error term. Model fit was assessed using R, R^2, adjusted R^2, and the standard error of the estimate; overall significance was evaluated using ANOVA; and individual effects were assessed using regression coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values. Statistical decisions were made at the 5% significance level. The questionnaire response analysis showed that 244 usable questionnaires were returned from 256 distributed questionnaires, representing 95.3%. The qualitative component included management interviews, which were used to contextualize quantitative results. Qualitative evidence was analyzed thematically by identifying recurring patterns concerning incentives, working conditions, recognition, commitment, productivity, and operational performance. Ethical procedures included institutional approval, informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and use of information for academic purposes. The methodology therefore combined descriptive evidence, inferential testing, and qualitative contextualization in a manner consistent with the study objectives.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 1: Level of Agreement on Employee Incentives

Views of respondents	N	Mean	SD
My salary and allowances reflect my responsibilities and performance.	244	3.94	.907
Performance-based bonuses and rewards motivate me to achieve targets.	244	4.24	.930
I am satisfied with the benefits and welfare programs provided by RwandAir.	244	4.29	.908
Incentives and bonuses are given on time and fairly.	244	4.23	.990
The incentive system encourages me to stay committed to the organization.	244	4.27	.938
My salary and allowances reflect my responsibilities and performance.	244	3.94	.907
Overall mean	244	4.15	.930

Source: Field Data (2026). Key: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 1 shows generally strong agreement concerning employee incentives, with an overall mean of 4.15 and a standard deviation of 0.930. The highest-rated statement was satisfaction with benefits and welfare programmes (M = 4.29, SD = 0.908). This suggests that welfare provisions are perceived as an important component of the organization's motivational package. The result is meaningful because welfare benefits may influence motivation through broader employee security and satisfaction rather than through immediate performance rewards alone. The statement that the incentive system encourages commitment recorded M = 4.27 (SD = 0.938), indicating that incentives are perceived to contribute to loyalty and continued attachment to the organization. Performance-based bonuses and rewards also recorded a high mean of 4.24 (SD = 0.930), suggesting that employees perceive a connection between rewards and target achievement. Similarly, timely and fair distribution of incentives scored M = 4.23 (SD = 0.990). The relatively larger standard deviation on this item indicates somewhat greater diversity of experience, implying that perceptions of fairness and timeliness may not be identical across employees or departments. The lowest mean, although still within the agreement range, was for the statement that salary and allowances reflect responsibilities and performance (M = 3.94, SD = 0.907). This is a strategically important finding. Employees generally accepted that compensation reflects their responsibilities, but the lower mean compared with other incentive dimensions suggests room for improvement in perceived pay-performance alignment. The descriptive evidence therefore points to a strong overall incentive environment with a particular opportunity to strengthen perceived fairness and alignment of compensation with responsibility and performance.

Table 2: Level of Agreement on Work Environment

Views of respondents	N	Mean	SD
My workplace is safe and secure.	244	4.28	.894
I have access to the tools and resources I need to perform my duties effectively.	244	4.55	.720
The organizational culture at RwandAir encourages teamwork and collaboration.	244	4.49	.937
The organization supports a healthy work-life balance.	244	4.27	.880
The work environment motivates me to perform better.	244	4.30	.909
Overall mean	244	4.37	.868

Source: Field Data (2026). Key: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 2 indicates that the work environment received the strongest overall descriptive assessment among the three motivation dimensions, with a mean of 4.37 and a standard deviation of 0.868. Access to tools and resources recorded the highest mean of 4.55 (SD = 0.720). This indicates strong agreement that employees have the operational resources required to perform their duties effectively. The relatively low standard deviation suggests considerable consistency in this perception. In an airline, adequate resources are particularly important because employee performance depends on coordinated access to equipment, information, systems, and other operational inputs. Teamwork and collaboration also received a high mean of 4.49 (SD = 0.937), showing that respondents generally perceived the organizational culture as supportive of collective work. This is important in aviation because service delivery and operational reliability depend on interdependence between functions. The workplace safety item scored M = 4.28 (SD = 0.894), while the work environment's ability to motivate employees scored M = 4.30 (SD = 0.909). These results indicate that respondents generally experienced their workplace as secure and motivational.

Work-life balance recorded the lowest mean within the work environment dimension, at 4.27 (SD = 0.880), although this still represents agreement. The relatively lower score may reflect the demanding schedules associated with aviation. Thus, the descriptive results present a positive work environment overall while highlighting employee well-being and work-life balance as areas requiring continued attention. Importantly, these favorable descriptive perceptions must later be distinguished from the variable's unique predictive contribution, which is tested through regression.

Table 3: Level of Agreement on Employee Recognition

Views of respondents	N	Mean	SD
My efforts and achievements are recognized by my supervisor/management.	244	4.60	.691
Regular feedback and appreciation motivate me to improve my performance.	244	3.36	1.608
Recognition programs encourage me to contribute more to organizational goals.	244	4.38	.728
RwandAir has clear systems to reward outstanding performance.	244	4.27	.938
Being recognized positively influences my motivation and loyalty to the company.	244	4.38	.666
Overall mean	244	4.19	.926

Source: Field Data (2026). Key: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 3 shows a high overall perception of employee recognition, with an overall mean of 4.19 (SD = 0.926). Recognition of employee efforts and achievements by supervisors or management recorded the highest mean in the entire recognition scale, M = 4.60 (SD = 0.691). The low standard deviation indicates that respondents were relatively consistent in reporting that their achievements are recognized. This is a strong indication that formal or informal acknowledgment is an established motivational practice within the organization. Recognition programmes encouraging contribution to organizational goals and recognition influencing motivation and loyalty both recorded M = 4.38. The standard deviations of 0.728 and 0.666 respectively indicate relatively consistent agreement. These findings suggest that recognition is not perceived merely as symbolic appreciation; employees associate it with increased willingness to contribute and stronger loyalty. The statement concerning clear systems for rewarding outstanding performance recorded M = 4.27 (SD = 0.938), indicating generally positive perceptions of the formal structure supporting recognition. A notable exception is regular feedback and appreciation, which recorded a mean of 3.36 and a standard deviation of 1.608. This is considerably lower than all other recognition items and has the highest variability. The result suggests that while employees generally feel their achievements are recognized, the frequency and consistency of feedback may differ substantially across departments or supervisors. This is an important managerial signal: recognition may be strong as an organizational principle but less consistent as a routine supervisory practice. Standardizing feedback expectations could therefore strengthen the effectiveness of recognition.

Table 4: Level of Agreement on Organizational Performance

Views of respondents	N	Mean	SD
I believe RwandAir consistently meets its operational goals.	244	4.40	.692
Employee motivation strategies improve productivity and efficiency.	244	4.18	.919
I feel satisfied and committed to my job at RwandAir.	244	4.27	.938
Motivated employees positively impact the company's overall performance.	244	4.29	.872
Overall, RwandAir's performance reflects the effectiveness of employee motivation strategies.	244	3.52	.532
Overall mean	244	4.13	.790

Source: Field Data (2026). Key: M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

Table 4 demonstrates that respondents generally perceived organizational performance positively, with an overall mean of 4.13 (SD = 0.790). The highest-rated statement was that RwandAir consistently meets its operational goals (M = 4.40, SD = 0.692). This indicates strong confidence in the organization's ability to achieve operational targets. The low standard deviation suggests that this perception was relatively consistent among respondents. Respondents also agreed that motivated employees positively affect overall company performance (M = 4.29, SD = 0.872), while satisfaction and commitment to the job scored M = 4.27 (SD = 0.938). The item concerning improvement in productivity and efficiency through motivation strategies recorded M = 4.18 (SD = 0.919).

Collectively, these findings indicate that employees perceive motivation as relevant to both individual commitment and organizational effectiveness. The lowest mean was 3.52 for the statement that overall RwandAir performance reflects the effectiveness of employee motivation strategies, although the standard deviation was comparatively low at 0.532. The lower mean is theoretically informative because it suggests that employees do not attribute organizational performance exclusively to motivation. Other influences, including market conditions, technology, management systems, competition, operating costs, and regulatory requirements, may also shape performance. Thus, the descriptive results support the importance of motivation while recognizing that organizational performance is multidimensional and cannot be reduced to a single human resource factor.

4.2 Inferential Analysis

Inferential analysis was undertaken to establish whether the descriptive patterns were supported by statistically significant relationships and predictive effects. Pearson correlation was first used to establish the direction and strength of bivariate relationships. Multiple regression was then applied to estimate the combined explanatory power of employee incentives, work environment, and employee recognition and to determine the unique contribution of each predictor. The analysis used a 5% significance threshold.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix between Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables	Employee Incentives	Work Environment	Employee Recognition	Organizational Performance
Employee Incentives	1	.823**	.463**	.794**
Work Environment	.823**	1	.494**	.706**
Employee Recognition	.463**	.494**	1	.670**
Organizational Performance	.794**	.706**	.670**	1

*Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); N = 244; all reported p-values = .000 in the source output.*

Table 5 reveals strong positive and statistically significant associations between all three motivation dimensions and organizational performance. Employee incentives have the strongest bivariate relationship with performance ($r = .794$, $p < .01$), followed by work environment ($r = .706$, $p < .01$) and employee recognition ($r = .670$, $p < .01$). These coefficients indicate that higher levels of perceived incentives, favorable work conditions, and recognition are associated with higher perceived organizational performance. The correlation between employee incentives and work environment is particularly high at $r = .823$. This indicates that employees who perceive the incentive system positively also tend to perceive the work environment positively. The correlations between incentives and recognition ($r = .463$) and between work environment and recognition ($r = .494$) are moderate. The pattern confirms that the three motivation strategies are related but not identical constructs.

The strong correlations with organizational performance support the first-stage expectation that motivation strategies are important in the organization. However, correlation does not establish the unique contribution of each variable because the predictors are themselves related. The regression analysis is therefore necessary. The high correlation between incentives and work environment also makes it especially important to interpret the regression coefficients as effects conditional on the other predictors rather than as simple bivariate relationships.

Table 6: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.865	.747	.743	.23275

Predictors: (Constant), Employee Incentives (X1), Work Environment (X2), Employee Recognition (X3).

Table 6 shows that the multiple correlation coefficient is $R = .865$, indicating a strong overall relationship between the three motivation strategies considered jointly and organizational performance. The R^2 of .747 means that 74.7% of the observed variation in organizational performance is statistically explained by employee incentives, work environment, and employee recognition in the sample. The adjusted R^2 of .743 remains very close to R^2, indicating that the explanatory power is not substantially reduced after accounting for the number of predictors.

The standard error of the estimate is .23275, indicating relatively limited unexplained prediction error around the fitted regression line. Taken together, the model summary suggests strong explanatory performance. Nevertheless, the 74.7% figure should not be interpreted as proof that motivation strategies causally generate exactly 74.7% of organizational performance. The design is non-experimental and the measures are based largely on employee perceptions. The appropriate interpretation is that the three predictors jointly account for a substantial proportion of variance in the measured organizational performance construct.

Table 7: ANOVA Results

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	29.173	3	9.724	179.500	.000
Residual	9.860	242	.054		
Total	39.032	244			

Dependent variable: Organizational Performance (Y). Predictors: Employee Incentives (X1), Work Environment (X2), Employee Recognition (X3).

Table 7 confirms that the regression model is statistically significant, $F(3, 242) = 179.500$, $p < .001$. The regression sum of squares (29.173) is substantially larger than the residual sum of squares (9.860), indicating that the model explains a large share of the variation in organizational performance relative to the unexplained component. The significance level is far below .05, so the null proposition that the predictors jointly have no explanatory relationship with organizational performance is rejected.

The ANOVA result is important because it establishes that the high R^2 is not merely a consequence of random sampling variation under the model assumptions. The three motivation dimensions, taken together, provide statistically significant predictive information about organizational performance. The result also justifies examining the individual regression coefficients to identify which dimensions are most influential after controlling for the other two.

Table 8: Regression Coefficients

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	-.665	.189	—	-3.521	.000
Employee Incentives (X1)	.554	.062	.593	8.991	.000
Work Environment (X2)	.026	.058	.030	.447	.655
Employee Recognition (X3)	.492	.056	.381	8.827	.000

Dependent variable: Organizational Performance (Y).

Table 8 provides the most direct evidence regarding the individual contribution of each motivation strategy. Employee incentives have an unstandardized coefficient $B = .554$ and standardized beta $\beta = .593$, with $t = 8.991$ and $p < .001$. The positive coefficient indicates that higher perceived employee incentives are associated with higher organizational performance when work environment and recognition are held constant. The standardized beta of .593 is the largest among the three predictors, making employee incentives the strongest unique predictor in the model. Employee recognition also has a positive and statistically significant effect, with $B = .492$, $\beta = .381$, $t = 8.827$, and $p < .001$. This indicates that recognition contributes independently to organizational performance after accounting for incentives and work environment. The coefficient confirms that appreciation, feedback, recognition systems, and acknowledgment of achievement are not merely descriptive features of the workplace; they retain statistically significant explanatory value in the multivariate model. Work environment has a positive but statistically insignificant coefficient, $B = .026$, $\beta = .030$, $t = .447$, $p = .655$. The positive sign is consistent with the descriptive and correlation results, which show that favorable working conditions are associated with better performance. However, once incentives and recognition are controlled for, the unique contribution of work environment is very small and not statistically distinguishable from zero at the 5% level. This is a critical finding because it demonstrates the difference between a strong bivariate association and a significant unique regression effect. The regression equation derived from the coefficients is: Organizational Performance = -0.665 + 0.554(Employee Incentives) + 0.026(Work Environment) + 0.492(Employee Recognition) + ε. The equation should be read as a predictive model rather than a causal law. It indicates that, holding the other predictors constant, a one-unit increase in the incentive measure is associated with a 0.554-unit increase in the performance measure, while a one-unit increase in recognition is associated with a 0.492-unit increase. The work environment coefficient is positive but small and statistically insignificant.

Table 9: Hypotheses Testing Results

Null Hypothesis	Coefficient	p-value	Decision
H01: Employee incentives have no significant effect on organizational performance at RwandAir.	0.554	0.000	Rejected
H02: Work environment has no significant effect on organizational performance at RwandAir.	0.026	0.655	Accepted
H03: Employee recognition has no significant effect on organizational performance at RwandAir.	0.492	0.000	Rejected

Note: p-value < 0.05 indicates statistical significance.

Table 9 summarizes the hypothesis decisions. H01 is rejected because employee incentives have a positive and statistically significant coefficient (B = .554, p < .001). The evidence therefore supports the conclusion that employee incentives have a significant effect on organizational performance in the study setting. H03 is also rejected because employee recognition has a positive and statistically significant coefficient (B = .492, p < .001). H02 is retained because the work environment coefficient is not statistically significant (B = .026, p = .655).

The hypothesis results provide an important integrated interpretation of the study. The descriptive findings show that all three dimensions are positively perceived, while the correlation analysis shows that all three are significantly associated with performance. Yet the regression analysis demonstrates that incentives and recognition have stronger unique effects. The evidence therefore supports a differentiated motivation strategy: RwandAir should not abandon workplace improvements, but management attention should be particularly focused on reward fairness, performance-linked incentives, and consistent recognition because these dimensions show the strongest independent statistical contribution.

4.3 Results Discussion

The first objective examined employee incentives and organizational performance. The descriptive results show strong employee agreement, with an overall incentive mean of 4.15. Benefits and welfare programmes were particularly highly rated, while performance-based rewards, timely incentives, and commitment generated by the incentive system all recorded means above 4.20. The correlation coefficient of .794 indicates a strong positive relationship with organizational performance, and the regression coefficient of β = .593 establishes that incentives were the strongest independent predictor among the three motivation strategies. This finding is consistent with Reinforcement Theory because rewards provide consequences that can strengthen desirable work behavior. When employees perceive that performance is recognized through tangible benefits, they have greater reason to maintain or increase effort. The finding is also consistent with the empirical studies reviewed in the source dissertation, including Ivanov and Petrov (2023), Johnson and Miller (2024), Adeyemi et al. (2023), and Niyonsenga et al. (2024), which associate incentives with productivity, commitment, and organizational outcomes. The RwandAir result adds contextual evidence that incentive systems may be particularly influential in an aviation environment where operational performance depends on sustained employee effort.

The lower mean for salary and allowances relative to other incentive indicators provides a useful qualification. Employees may value welfare benefits and performance bonuses while still questioning whether base compensation fully reflects responsibility and performance. The organization should therefore distinguish between having incentives and having a perceived fair incentive system. Fairness, transparency, timeliness, and alignment with measurable performance appear particularly important because the correlation and regression results suggest that the broader incentive construct is strongly connected with performance.

The second objective examined work environment. The descriptive mean of 4.37 was the highest of the three motivation dimensions, and access to tools and resources recorded the highest individual work-environment mean of 4.55. Teamwork and collaboration also received strong agreement. These results indicate that RwandAir employees generally experience a favorable operational environment. The correlation coefficient of .706 confirms a strong positive association with organizational performance. However, the regression coefficient was small and statistically insignificant (β = .030, p = .655). This apparent contradiction is analytically important. A strong correlation indicates that employees who report better work environments also tend to report better organizational performance. But because work environment is strongly correlated with incentives (r = .823) and also related to recognition, much of the information carried by the work-environment measure overlaps with other motivation dimensions. Once incentives and recognition are entered into the model, the unique explanatory contribution of work environment becomes very small.

The result does not imply that workplace safety, resources, teamwork, and work-life balance are unimportant. Rather, it suggests that their influence may be supportive, indirect, or shared with other organizational practices. This interpretation is compatible with JD–R Theory, which treats job resources as mechanisms that enable employees to manage demands and perform effectively. The practical implication is that RwandAir should maintain strong workplace conditions as a foundation while recognizing that, in this sample, incentives and recognition offer greater unique predictive value.

The third objective examined employee recognition. The overall recognition mean of 4.19 indicates strong agreement, while recognition by supervisors achieved the highest item mean of 4.60. Recognition programmes and recognition-related loyalty also recorded means of 4.38. The correlation with organizational performance was positive and significant (r = .670, p < .01), and the regression coefficient was positive and significant (β = .381, p < .001). Recognition therefore emerged as the second strongest independent predictor after employee incentives. This finding supports the view that employees respond not only to material rewards but also to signals that their contributions are valued. Recognition may reinforce desired performance, strengthen organizational identification, and encourage employees to contribute beyond minimum job requirements. The result is consistent with the studies reviewed in the source, including Kozlov and Ivanov (2023), Chai and Boonmee (2023), Dubois and Lefevre (2024), and Niyonsenga et al. (2024).

At the same time, the low mean of 3.36 and high standard deviation of 1.608 for regular feedback and appreciation should receive managerial attention. The evidence suggests that recognition is not uniformly experienced in

everyday supervisory practice. The organization may have formal recognition programmes that employees value, but the frequency and quality of routine feedback may differ by supervisor or department. More consistent feedback practices could therefore increase the practical effectiveness of recognition and strengthen the motivational climate. The overall model provides the strongest evidence concerning the combined contribution of motivation strategies. R = .865 and R^2 = .747 demonstrate that the three predictors collectively explain a substantial share of the variance in organizational performance. The statistically significant ANOVA result confirms that the model has strong overall predictive value.
Yet the coefficients show that the predictors do not contribute equally: incentives have the largest standardized coefficient, recognition has the second largest, and work environment has a very small, non-significant coefficient. The integrated findings therefore support a strategic rather than purely additive interpretation of employee motivation. RwandAir appears to have favorable workplace conditions, but the performance consequences of motivation are more strongly linked to how employees are rewarded and recognized. Management should consequently view incentives, recognition, and working conditions as complementary rather than interchangeable. Incentives can provide reinforcement, recognition can provide social and psychological reinforcement, and the work environment can provide the resources necessary for employees to act on their motivation.

The findings also contribute to the research gap identified in the source dissertation. Rather than simply confirming that motivation matters, the study identifies which dimensions have stronger unique statistical relationships with performance in the RwandAir setting. This distinction is valuable because organizations have finite managerial resources. The results suggest that improving compensation fairness, performance-linked rewards, and recognition practices may yield greater marginal benefits for perceived organizational performance than relying on workplace improvements alone, even though workplace quality remains essential. The results should, however, be interpreted within the methodological boundaries of the study. The design is descriptive and correlational rather than experimental, and the measures rely substantially on employee perceptions. Consequently, the results establish statistically significant associations and predictive relationships, but they do not prove that changes in motivation strategies would mechanically cause an equivalent change in organizational performance. The high R^2 should likewise be interpreted as model explanatory power within the measured constructs, not as a complete explanation of all organizational performance. Management decisions should therefore combine these findings with operational performance indicators and longitudinal evidence.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

The study concludes that employee motivation strategies are important predictors of organizational performance at RwandAir Ltd, but their contributions differ by dimension. Employee incentives demonstrated the strongest descriptive and inferential evidence. Respondents generally agreed that welfare benefits, performance-based bonuses, timely incentives, and commitment generated by the incentive system motivate them. The strong correlation with organizational performance and the largest standardized regression coefficient show that incentives have the strongest unique statistical contribution in the model. The study also concludes that employee recognition is a significant determinant of organizational performance. Recognition by supervisors, recognition programmes, and appreciation were strongly perceived by employees, and recognition retained a significant positive effect after controlling for incentives and work environment. The finding confirms the value of both formal recognition systems and interpersonal acknowledgment. However, the relatively low mean and high variability associated with regular feedback indicate that the consistency of recognition practices can still be improved. The work environment is positively associated with organizational performance and is highly rated by employees, especially in relation to access to tools, resources, teamwork, and safety.

Nevertheless, its unique regression effect was not statistically significant. The appropriate conclusion is therefore not that the work environment is irrelevant, but that its direct contribution is weaker when incentives and recognition are considered simultaneously. A supportive environment should be treated as a necessary organizational foundation that enables employees to perform effectively, while greater strategic emphasis should be placed on the motivation dimensions with stronger unique predictive effects. Overall, the model explains 74.7% of the variance in organizational performance, demonstrating strong explanatory power within the study data. The findings provide evidence that RwandAir can strengthen organizational performance by maintaining a supportive workplace while giving particular attention to fair incentives, performance-linked rewards, and consistent employee recognition. The results also demonstrate the value of combining descriptive and inferential analysis: high employee agreement alone would not have revealed that work environment had a non-significant unique effect.

5.2 Recommendations

1. RwandAir Ltd should strengthen performance-based incentive systems by linking bonuses and other rewards to transparent, measurable indicators such as service quality, punctuality, safety performance, customer satisfaction, and relevant departmental targets.
2. Management should regularly review salaries, allowances, and welfare benefits to ensure that compensation is perceived as fair, competitive, timely, and aligned with employee responsibilities and performance. Particular attention should be given to the relatively lower rating of salary and allowance alignment.

3. RwandAir should standardize employee recognition practices across departments. Recognition should include both formal mechanisms, such as awards and performance recognition programmes, and routine supervisory appreciation so that employees receive consistent acknowledgment of their contributions.
4. Management should introduce clear expectations for regular feedback and appreciation because this was the weakest recognition indicator and showed the greatest variability. Supervisors should be encouraged to provide timely, specific, constructive, and equitable feedback.
5. RwandAir should continue investing in workplace safety, operational tools, resources, teamwork, and employee well-being. Although work environment was not a significant unique predictor in the regression model, its strong descriptive ratings and correlation with performance indicate that it remains an important supporting condition.
6. Employee motivation initiatives should be periodically evaluated using employee surveys and organizational performance indicators. This would allow management to identify which incentives and recognition practices produce the strongest improvements and to adjust programmes according to employee needs.
7. Management should strengthen communication and employee participation in motivation-related decisions. Regular staff consultations, departmental meetings, and feedback channels can help identify concerns about fairness, workload, career progression, and recognition before they undermine motivation.
8. Future research should compare RwandAir with other airlines or service organizations and should consider longitudinal designs and additional predictors such as leadership style, training and development, organizational culture, technology, and employee engagement. Such studies could provide stronger evidence about causality and the changing contribution of motivation strategies over time.

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