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Prosocial Bonuses as an Incentive

Student's Name

Institutional Affiliation

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The article on prosocial bonuses represents a field study on the impact of prosocial bonuses on the job satisfaction of company employees. Prosocial bonuses refer to money that is allocated to the employees to be spent on sociable causes rather than on oneself. Through this, the study by Anik et al. (2013) sought to prove that employees would be made to be happier and more cooperative in the long run when allocated more to be spent on people other than themselves. In this way, this paper represents a summary of the article by Anik, et al. (2013), and takes a critical look to evaluate the applicability of the hypothesis.

According to Anik et al. (2013), less than half of employed Americans are happy in their work places. Additional data suggests that they are spending more of their time in the workplace unlike in past years. This points to an unhealthy working formula that decreases productivity. In a quest to improve the employee morale, companies have developed various schemes aimed at improving work output by aiming at increasing employee happiness. The most common incentive scheme is rewarding the employees with extra money that can be spent on their individual interests. This has been known to increase job satisfaction, performance in the work place and increased throughput. However, Anik et al. (2013) suggest otherwise by proposing that organizations should provide employees with prosocial bonuses that can be used on charitable causes and on their fellow workers rather than for their personal gains.

The first step was done by examining whether assigning prosocial bonuses to employees can impact the general performance of employees, and improve on job satisfaction. The results of the study indicated that employees who participated and therefore received a prosocial bonus were much happier than their counterparts (Anik et al., 2013). While employees who received personal bonuses spent them on themselves, prosocial bonuses were recorded to have been spent on purchasing items for others such as food stuff, cards or treating workmates to an outing.

Through this, it is believed that the prosocial bonuses led to strengthening of relationships and even the creation of new relationships. Additionally, prosocial bonuses have also been associated with increased workplace coordination and cohesiveness among teams (Anik et al., 2013). Using the bonus on fellow team members was seen to increase the feeling of reciprocating and in a way punish the free riders who do not contribute to the growth of the organization. Thus while team-based bonuses can help improve relationships between the colleagues, they can also cause decrease employee outcomes (Anik et al., 2013).

In my view, prosocial bonuses can play a big role in the improvement of employee morale and team cohesion. However, it cannot be used as the sole incentive to improve employee performance and has to be accompanied by the more common personal bonuses. Moreover, there should not be a large disparity in favor of the social bonus when compared to the personal bonus. In this way, the employees will feel valued and will utilize their social bonus more appropriately.

Reference

Anik L., Aknin, L.B., Norton, M.I., Dunn, E.W., & Quoidbach J. (2013) Prosocial bonuses increase employee satisfaction and team performance. *PLoS One*, 8(9), e75509.

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