ISSN(Online) : 3139-4396
International Journal on Commerce, Management, Tourism and Home Sciences
Vol.1|Issue1|July -2026
Available online at: http://www.ijcmth.com/current-issue.php

The Role of Recognition Practices in Shaping Employee Loyalty and Commitment: An Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

Employee recognition programs are a big deal in how companies keep their workers around for the long haul. I mean, in modern HR stuff, they help build that connection between people and their jobs. This paper looks at how these programs affect retention and commitment to the organization. It zeros in on things like how visible the recognition is, if it feels fair, whether its personalized, inclusive for everyone, how often it happens, and if its enough The data came from online surveys sent to employees in different industries around Coimbatore, in Tamil Nadu. A bunch of folks from various places filled them out. From what the results show, when recognition is clear and open, treated equally, made just for the person, open to all, done regularly, and actually meaningful, it makes employees feel valued. That sense of being appreciated sticks with them and ties them closer to the company. It leads to them staying longer and feeling more committed, I think. Some parts stand out more, like when its customized to what someone did and given right when it matters. That seems to really shape how employees think and act positively toward their work. Not everything is perfect though, some systems might miss that. For organizations, this points to needing policies that adapt to what workers want now, which is changing all the time. It feels like recognition has to evolve with the workforce. Overall, the study adds to knowing how smart recognition can boost loyalty in companies today. There are gaps maybe, but it helps see the links

Keywords: Employee Recognition, Retention, Organizational Commitment, Human Resource Management.

INTRODUCTION

Employee recognition is basically about noticing and thanking workers for what they do at their jobs. It helps push good habits and makes people feel better about coming to work each day. I think in todays world with all sorts of different people working together and jobs changing fast, this kind of thing is really key to keeping folks motivated. Programs like that dont just say thanks, they build up a nicer vibe in the company, which probably leads to people sticking around longer and liking their roles more.

Things like verbal shootouts or bonuses or even chances to move up in the job can all count as recognition. Its not always one size fits all though. What makes these programs work well comes down to stuff like making sure everyone sees it happen, treating people fair, tailoring it to what each person likes, including everybody no matter what, doing it often enough, and making it feel right in scale. These parts shape how workers take it in and if it actually clicks with them. Some might say visibility stands out the most, but im not totally sure, it depends on the place I guess.

This study looks at the main pieces that make recognition effective and how they help employees feel valued and part of the team. It digs into why people decide to stay or not, and how committed they get to the companys aims. The research covers programs from different fields, focusing a lot on how theyre set up and run, across various setups.

One goal is checking how solid recognition setups affect keeping employees and their dedication to the org. Another is looking at visibility, fairness, personal touches, inclusivity, how often it happens, and if its adequate enough to boost those programs. Then theres finding good ways to design and roll them out that match what workers want. Finally, suggesting some real tips for companies to step up their recognition and help with retention and commitment like that. It seems like theres room for more on the inclusivity side, but thats just a thought.

Theoretical work

The concept: Employee Recognition Programs

Employee recognition programs aim to appreciate and reward employees for their efforts, achievements, and overall contributions to the organization. Recognition programmes play a crucial role in building a friendly atmosphere in the organisation, in boosting the morale of workers, and in increasing the efficiency of the organisation as a whole. Recognition has traditionally been seen as a powerful motivator, and research has shown that it has a serious effect on morale and output (Nelson, 2005). Numerous studies have shown that recognition is one of the most powerful motivators at work. Brun and Dugas (2008), for instance, noted that well planned and well executed recognition processes are associated with higher levels of employee engagement and better organizational performance.

Within organizations, recognition does not consist only in monetary rewards. Recognition can take many forms such as verbal praise, public recognition, career advancement, and intangible and tangible rewards (Chiang &Birtch, 2011). Eisenberger et al (1990) pointed out that the way employees see the organization—especially as shown by managers' praise and recognition—is strongly related to increased organizational commitment. In organizations employees can be appreciated not only by their managers but also by their colleagues. Recognition by one's colleagues in the office increases the feeling of participation and team spirit and helps to build a better organization. Albrecht and Dineen (2016) found that peer recognition increases employee engagement which improves employee retention and organizational commitment.

Employee recognition is usually divided into two categories: monetary and non-monetary. Monetary recognition includes financial rewards such as bonuses, pay increments, and gift vouchers. Financial incentives are usually immediate and tangible, and therefore more attractive to employees (Nelson, 2005). Recognition that is not financial, however, may be in the form of praise, honor, decoration, or a written acknowledgment Kelleher (2013) notes that non-monetary recognition can be as effective as money—and perhaps more so—when it is consistent with employees' values and motivations.

Grote (2002) claimed that visible recognition, if openly acknowledged within the organization, helps to reinforce desirable behaviour and increase employees' sense of pride and achievement. Fairness in the application of recognition procedures matters just as much in organizations. The rewards that are seen as fair and earned are the ones that help maintain trust in the organization and reduce the likelihood of dissatisfaction or feelings of unfairness on the part of employees (Folger&Konovsky, 1989). Recognizing employees in ways that reflect their preferences and differences makes the recognition more meaningful and improves the employer/employee relationship (Tymon et al., 2011). Recognition is most effective when it is timely, for immediate praise for good work encourages repetition of the good deed and gives a feeling of pride in achievement (Nelson, 2005).

Ensuring that inclusion is built into recognition programs in organizations provides all employees with the same chance to be recognized and helps to create a fair and respectful organization (Shore et al., 2011). How often recognition is given is also important because regular praise clearly helps keep employees motivated and involved over the long term (Dewhurst et al., 2010). Recognition, therefore, when it is felt to be sufficient, that is, when the reward is considered to be commensurate with the degree of employee effort and contribution, tends to help maintain employee morale and organizational loyalty (Um, 2024).

The concept: Employee Retention

Employee retention is all about an organization's ability to keep its people around and stop them from leaving on their own. When turnover spikes, it gets expensive fast—not just in dollars spent on hiring and training, but in lost know-how and a dip in morale too

(Park, 2024). In human resource management, people have spent a lot of time studying how employee recognition ties into retention. The evidence is pretty clear: when workers feel like their efforts actually matter, they're not as quick to look for another job (Mone& London, 2017). Losing employees hurts. It means shelling out more for recruiting and on boarding, saying goodbye to valuable experience, and watching the team's energy take a hit (Hom et al., 2017). That's why recognition programs matter—they're a key way to show people they count, which helps keep them around.

Studies keep coming back to the same point. Recognition works best when it lines up with what different generations care about. Take Millennials, for example. Schullery (2013) found that when recognition is quick, specific, and clearly tied to what someone actually did, Millennials feel more loyal and are more likely to stick with the company. Time and again, research finds that feeling noticed and respected nudges people to stay (Allen et al., 2003).

Recognition isn't just about keeping people from leaving, either. Brun and Dugas (2008) pointed out that it boosts mental well-being too. When recognition is genuine—whether that means money or just a heartfelt thank you—it can shape how people feel about their work and build real loyalty over time. Put simply, recognizing employees isn't just a nice gesture; it's a smart strategy for holding onto them.

H1a: Employee recognition programs have a positive impact on employee retention.

The concept: Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is the degree of psychological attachment, loyalty, and identification that members develop with their organization. In addition to other benefits, high levels of organizational commitment have been found to positively influence work performance, job satisfaction, and decrease turnover intent (Meyer et al., 2002). In this setting, employee recognition is an important organizational tool for sustaining and strengthening employee commitment.

Meyer and Allen (1991) viewed organizational commitment as a three-component, or multidimensional, concept consisting of affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment is the employee's emotional attachment to and involvement in the organization. Employees are more likely to trust the organization, feel emotionally attached to it, and identify with it if they see recognition as fair and open.

The other type of commitment, continuance commitment, depends on the employee's weighing of the costs of leaving the organization and may be affected by programs of recognition. Ghosh et al According to Allen (2014), frequent recognition of individual efforts increases the satisfaction employees derive from their jobs and decreases the likelihood that they will look for other employment. Normative commitment, based on a feeling of moral obligation to stay with the organization, might be increased by recognition programs that reinforce the organization's values, culture, and mission. Recognizing employees in this way helps them understand the larger purpose of the organization and makes them more committed to it (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Workers with greater organizational commitment tend to go beyond their formal job responsibilities, are more satisfied with their jobs, and are less likely to leave the organization (ERTOP-, 2020). Similarly, Tymon et al. (2011) found that supervisor support and recognition are important predictors of greater organizational commitment and lower intention to leave. All of these research studies show that employee recognition programs are key to building organizational commitment.

H1b: Employee recognition programs increase organizational commitment.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Procedure

The study comprised a sample of 209 employees drawn from diverse industries located in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Data were collected using an online survey administered through email invitations and professional networking platforms. The collected data were analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), a robust multivariate statistical technique that integrates factor analysis and regression analysis. SEM is particularly suitable for examining complex models involving multiple constructs, as it allows for the simultaneous assessment of both direct and indirect relationships among variables. The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in Table 1.

The demographic profile indicates that the sample predominantly consists of mid-career professionals. A majority of respondents fall within the 25–44 age group, accounting for approximately 63% of the total sample. In terms of gender distribution, males constitute 59.60% of the respondents, while females represent 40.40%. With respect to industry affiliation, the Information Technology sector accounts for the largest share of participants (47.40%).

Regarding work experience, nearly half of the respondents (47.30%) report having between seven and ten years of professional experience, suggesting that the findings largely reflect the perceptions of relatively experienced employees. Educational qualifications reveal that most respondents hold a Master's degree (55.50%). The majority of participants occupy mid-level positions (51.40%). Furthermore, a significant segment of the sample (41.30%) is employed in large organizations with a workforce exceeding 1,000 employees.

Table 1: Demographic Profiles

N = 209		Frequency
Age	Less than 25 years	8.10%
	25 – 34 years	30.60%
	35 – 44 years	32.30%
	45 – 54 years	16.90%
	55 and above	12.10%
Gender	Male	59.60%
	Female	40.40%
Industry	Information Technology	47.40%
	Health Care	5.30%
	Manufacturing	5.70%
	Finance	10.50%
	Education	31.10%
Years of Experience	Less than 1 year	10.50%
	1 – 3 years	15.80%
	4 – 6 years	21.10%
	7 – 10 years	47.30%
	More than 10 years	5.30%
Highest Education Qualification	Bachelor's Degree	17.30%
	Master's Degree	55.50%
	Professional Degree	27.20%
Current Job Level	Entry Level	20.10%
	Mid-Level	51.40%
	Senior Level	18.20%
	Management	10.30%
Company Size	11-50 employees	8.30%
	51-200 employees	15.80%
	201-500 employees	19.10%
	501-1000 employees	15.50%
	More than 1000 employees	41.30%

Measures

Participants evaluated the dimensions of the employee recognition program using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The study examined six key dimensions of employee recognition programs (ERP): visibility, fairness, personalization, inclusivity, frequency, and adequacy. Visibility referred to the extent to which employees could observe recognition being given to others within the organization. Fairness captured perceptions of equal and unbiased access to recognition opportunities. Personalization assessed the degree to which recognition was tailored to individual contributions and achievements. Inclusivity evaluated whether recognition initiatives encompassed all employees without exclusion. Frequency measured how often recognition was provided, while adequacy reflected employees' perceptions of whether the recognition received was meaningful and sufficient.

Organizational commitment (OC) was measured using statements that captured employees' emotional attachment to the organization, their sense of identification with organizational values, and their level of involvement in organizational activities. Retention intentions (RET) were assessed through items relating to respondents' willingness to remain with the organization, future career plansand their likelihood of recommending the organization to others as a desirable place to work. Collectively, these measures enabled an examination of how various elements of employee recognition programs influence organizational commitment and employees' intentions to stay.

Data Analysis and Results

The data were analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), following a two-stage approach that involved the assessment of the measurement model prior to evaluating the structural model. SEM was selected due to its suitability for analysing complex relationships among multiple latent constructs and its flexibility in handling variance-based models without strict assumptions about data distribution. This technique is widely used in social science research for testing theoretical models (Hair Jr. et al., 2013).

Table 2 presents the results of the measurement model for the employee recognition program, retention intention, and organizational commitment constructs. All constructs demonstrated satisfactory convergent validity, with most indicator loadings exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2018).

The employee recognition program (ERP) construct exhibited strong internal consistency and reliability. Factor loadings for frequency (0.812), adequacy (0.802), personalization (0.778), fairness (0.881), inclusivity (0.879), and visibility (0.704) were within acceptable limits, indicating good convergent validity. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.839 and Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.871 further confirmed high internal consistency. An Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value of 0.682 indicated that a substantial proportion of variance was captured by the construct indicators.

The retention (RET) construct also demonstrated strong reliability and validity. Factor loadings for items R1 (0.958), R2 (0.948), R3 (0.813), R4 (0.917), and R5 (0.678) were largely satisfactory, with one item marginally below the preferred threshold. The Cronbach's Alpha of 0.822 and Composite Reliability of 0.889 indicated robust internal consistency. The AVE value of 0.755 suggested a high level of explained variance, supporting the construct's convergent validity.

Similarly, the organizational commitment (OC) construct showed acceptable reliability and validity. Factor loadings for items OC1 (0.861), OC2 (0.830), OC3 (0.638), and OC4 (0.758) indicated reasonable indicator performance, despite one item falling below the ideal threshold. The Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.818 and Composite Reliability of 0.786 demonstrated acceptable internal consistency, while an AVE of 0.603 indicated that a sufficient proportion of variance was explained by the construct indicators. Overall, the results confirm that the measurement model possesses adequate reliability and validity for subsequent structural analysis.

Table 2: Measurement Model

Constructs	Items	Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Employee Recognition Program	Frequency	0.812	0.839	0.871	0.682
	Adequacy	0.802	0.833		
	Personalization	0.778	0.837		
	Faireness	0.881	0.910		
	Inclusivity	0.879	0.893		
	Visibility	0.704	0.836		
Retention	R1	0.958	0.822	0.889	0.755
	R2	0.948	0.827		
	R3	0.813	0.834		
	R4	0.917	0.822		
	R5	0.678	0.836		
Organizational Commitment	OC1	0.861	0.818	0.786	0.603
	OC2	0.830	0.826		
	OC3	0.638	0.843		
	OC4	0.758	0.834		

Model Fit Measures

The model fit assessment provides meaningful evidence regarding the adequacy of the proposed structural model. The chi-square (χ^2) statistic was 2310 with 90 degrees of freedom, and the associated p-value was less than 0.001. While a significant chi-square value typically suggests a lack of perfect fit, it is well acknowledged that this statistic is highly sensitive to sample size. In studies with relatively large samples, even wellspecified models may yield significant chi-square values; therefore, reliance on additional fit indices is recommended for a more balanced evaluation of model adequacy. Model fit measured values arein Table 3.

To address this, several alternative goodnessoffit measures was examined. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) was found to be 0.0735, which is below the recommended threshold of 0.08. This indicates a good model fit.

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value was 0.0834, which lies close to the commonly accepted cutoff. RMSEA values below 0.06 are generally considered indicative of a good fit. Accordingly, the RMSEA result suggests that the model demonstrates an acceptable to reasonable level of fit.

Further evidence of model adequacy is provided by the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI). The GFI value of 0.976 exceeds the recommended minimum threshold of 0.90, indicating an excellent correspondence between the proposed model and the observed data. Similarly, the AGFI value of 0.955, which accounts for model complexity, also surpasses the acceptable threshold, reinforcing the robustness of the model fit.

In addition to overall model fit, discriminant validity was examined using the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations. The HTMT values among the constructs were 0.816, 0.741 and 0.863. All values were below the critical threshold, indicating that the constructs are empirically distinct from one another. These findings confirm adequate discriminant validity and support the conceptual separation of the constructs included in the model. Detailed statistics are reported in Table 4.

Table 3: Model Fit

Test for Exact Fit

χ^2	**df**	**p**

2310	90	< .001

Fit Measures

SRMR	**RMSEA**	**GFI**	**AGFI**
0.0735	0.0834	0.976	0.955

Table 4: Discriminant Validity

Heterotrait - Monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations

	ERP	RET	OC
ERP	1.000	-	-
RET	0.816	1.000	-
OC	0.741	0.863	1.000

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model analysis demonstrates statistically significant relationships among Employee Recognition Programs (ERP), employee retention (RET), and organizational commitment (OC). The results indicate that ERP exerts a strong positive influence on retention ($\beta = 0.936$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that welldesigned recognition initiatives substantially enhance employees' intentions to remain with the organization. In addition, ERP shows a direct and significant effect on organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.977$, $p = 0.001$), indicating that recognition practices contribute meaningfully to strengthening employees' psychological attachment to the organization. Furthermore, organizational commitment is positively associated with retention ($\beta = 0.753$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the interconnected nature of these constructs. The detailed path coefficients and corresponding significance levels are presented in Table 5.

Assessment of the Hypothesized Model

The findings derived from Table 5 and the structural path model (Figure 2) provide strong empirical support for the proposed hypotheses. Overall, the results emphasize the pivotal role of employee recognition programs in shaping both retention intentions and organizational commitment.

H1a: Employee recognition programs positively impact employee retention.

Hypothesis H1a examined the direct relationship between ERP and employee retention. The path coefficient from ERP to RET was 0.936. The p-value was less than 0.001, indicating a highly significant relationship. This substantial positive effect confirms that effective recognition programs play a critical role in enhancing employee retention by reinforcing employees' perceptions of being valued and appreciated within the organization. The finding is consistent with earlier studies that underscore recognition as a key determinant of employees' decisions to remain with their employer.

H1b: Employee recognition programs positively impact organizational commitment.

Hypothesis H1b assessed the influence of ERP on organizational commitment. The results reveal a strong positive path coefficient of 0.955. The p-value of less than 0.001 indicates a highly significant effect. This evidence robustly supports Hypothesis H1b, demonstrating that recognition programs significantly strengthen employees' commitment to their organization. Such findings align with existing literature suggesting that recognition fosters feelings of belonging, loyalty, and identification with organizational values.

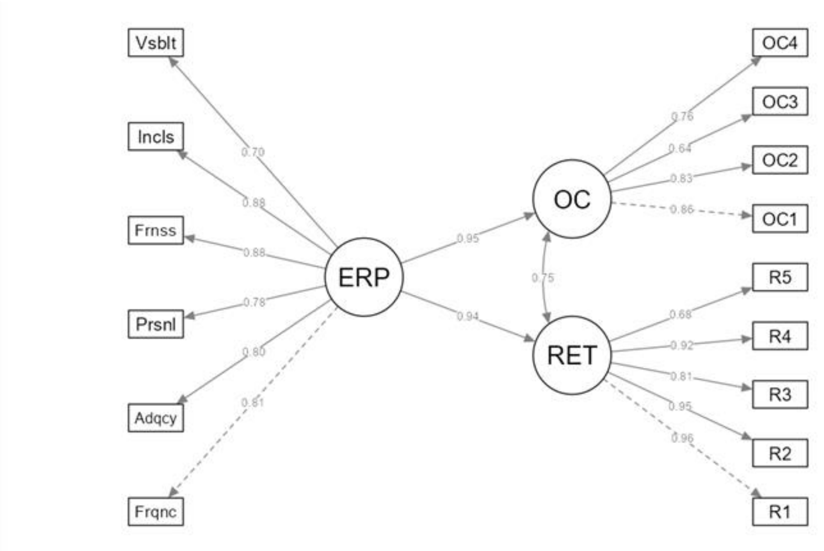
In summary, the structural model assessment confirms that employee recognition programs have a significant and positive impact on both employee retention and organizational commitment. These results highlight the strategic importance of implementing effective and meaningful recognition practices to promote workforce stability, enhance commitment, and support the development of a more engaged and dedicated employee base.

Table 5: Structural Model Assessment

Path	**Path Coefficient**	SE	p

ERP - > RET	0.936	0.0487	<0.001
ERP - > OC	0.955	0.044	<0.001
RET <-> OC	0.753	0.0378	<0.001

Figure 2: Path Model



Discussion

The results of the present study clearly demonstrate the pivotal role of Employee Recognition Programs (ERP) in strengthening both employee retention (RET) and organizational commitment (OC). The strong and statistically significant relationships observed between ERP and retention ($\beta = 0.936$) and between ERP and organizational commitment ($\beta = 0.955$) highlight the effectiveness of recognition initiatives in shaping positive employee attitudes and behaviours. These findings reinforce earlier theoretical and empirical work suggesting that recognition functions as a powerful motivational mechanism that enhances employees' sense of value, appreciation, and belonging within the organization.

The pronounced influence of ERP on retention intentions indicates that employees who perceive recognition as meaningful and consistent are more inclined to remain with their organization. In an increasingly competitive labour market, where skilled employees have greater mobility and career options, recognition emerges as a strategic tool for reducing turnover. Organizations that actively acknowledge employee contributions are better positioned to retain talent, minimize replacement costs, and maintain continuity in skills and knowledge.

Similarly, the strong positive effect of ERP on organizational commitment suggests that recognition initiatives contribute significantly to employees' emotional attachment to their organization. Recognition fosters feelings of pride, accomplishment, and identification with organizational values, which in turn strengthen commitment. A committed workforce is more likely to demonstrate discretionary effort, higher engagement levels, and sustained performance, ultimately benefiting organizational effectiveness.

The significant association between organizational commitment and retention further emphasizes the interdependent nature of these constructs. Employees who feel emotionally connected to their organization are less likely to consider leaving, while those who perceive stability and satisfaction in their roles are more likely to develop stronger commitment. This reciprocal relationship suggests that initiatives aimed at enhancing either retention or commitment are likely to reinforce the other. Overall, the findings provide compelling evidence that employee recognition programs are integral to building a stable, committed, and motivated workforce. Organizations are therefore encouraged to design recognition systems that are visible, fair, personalized, inclusive, frequent, and adequate. Future research may extend this work by examining which specific recognition dimensions are most influential across different industries, organizational sizes, and demographic groups.

Implications

The findings of this study suggest that employee recognition should be treated as a central part of human resource strategy rather than an optional practice. Well-designed recognition programs that are fair, visible, inclusive, personalized, timely, and meaningful help employees feel valued, which improves morale, engagement, and job satisfaction. When organizations build a culture of appreciation, employees develop stronger loyalty and commitment, leading to greater workforce stability and sustained performance. The results also show that recognition is most effective when it is timely and tailored to individual contributions, highlighting the need for managers to be trained in delivering sincere and consistent acknowledgment. By embedding recognition into organizational values and aligning it with key business goals, organizations can motivate employees while reinforcing behaviours that directly support long-term success.

FUTURE RESEARCH SCOPE

Future research can extend this study by exploring how employee recognition programs operate across different industries, organizational sizes, and cultural settings. Comparing these contexts would help identify how recognition practices can be adapted to suit diverse work environments. Long-term or longitudinal studies are also recommended to better understand how recognition programs influence employee retention and organizational commitment over time. In addition, future studies could focus more on employees' personal views of what they consider meaningful recognition, as this insight would help organizations design more relevant and motivating programs. Overall, this study reinforces the importance of wellplanned recognition initiatives in strengthening retention and commitment, suggesting that organizations investing in effective recognition practices can achieve higher employee satisfaction, loyalty, and overall performance.

CONCLUSION

This study shows just how much employee recognition programs matter when it comes to keeping people around and making them care about the company. When you make recognition visible, fair, personal, inclusive, regular, and meaningful, people feel seen. They feel like they belong. And when employees feel truly recognized, they're much more likely to stick with the company and actually care about its goals.

The results also make one thing clear: recognition can't just be an afterthought. It needs to be baked right into the way companies manage people and lead teams. When recognition is part of the culture, it creates a place where people want to work — a place that draws in good talent and helps them grow. Companies that put recognition front and center end up with employees who are more committed and less likely to leave, which boosts performance and sets the company up for long-term success. This study adds to what we know about recognition in today's workplaces and gives companies real ways to build a loyal, engaged, and motivated team.

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Cite this Article

S. NITHYAPRIYA, *"***The Role of Recognition Practices in Shaping Employee Loyalty and Commitment: An Empirical Study*"***, *"International Journal on Commerce, Management, Tourism and Home Science",ISSN (Online): Applied, Volume 1, Issue 1, pp. 11 -22, March - 2026.*

Journal URL : https://ijcmth.com