

RESEARCH ARTICLE:

Motivation Levels of Administrative Employees at a Selected Government Department

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Received: 17 June 2024 | Revised: 03 April 2025 | Published: 05 June 2025

Reviewing Editor: Dr. Trisha Ramsuraj, Durban University of Technology

Abstract

In regions across South Africa there is an urgent need for government departments to deliver high-quality services consistently. The efficient and timely delivery of government services to citizens is largely dependent on the critical role played by administrative employees. This study assessed the motivation levels among administrative employees within a selected government department. The study used Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory framework that distinguishes between intrinsic motivation (doing something for internal satisfaction or personal fulfilment) and extrinsic motivation (driven by external rewards such as salary, recognition or career advancement). The research primarily explored intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing employee motivation, employing quantitative research methodology to assess the motivation levels of administrative employees. A structured questionnaire utilising a 5-point Likert scale was used to gather quantitative data. Initially, the preliminary study involving 20 administrative employees was conducted using a closed-ended questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. The reliability of the questionnaire constructs was assessed using Cronbach's alpha which yielded an overall alpha range of 0.70 to 0.95, indicating strong internal consistency among the items within each construct. As this study remains ongoing, conclusions will not be drawn solely from the preliminary study; instead, findings will be generalised to the entire population under investigation.

Keywords: motivation; intrinsic; extrinsic; administrative employees

Introduction

Administrative employees are recruited for and assigned various organisational and administrative responsibilities to ensure the seamless functioning of the office space (Prabhu *et al.*, 2020). Organisations acknowledge the diverse tasks undertaken by administrative employees and their indispensability to operational efficiency (Mxenge *et al.*, 2014). Administrative employees are integral to accomplishing the goals and objectives of any organisation, with their effectiveness serving as a cornerstone for success (Bugdol and Pokrzywa, 2020). Administrative employees are commonly considered the foundation of every organisation, with their performance significantly impacted by their level of motivation (Mawudeku and Ankumah, 2021). According to Loukusa (2022), "motivation" originates from the word "motive", denoting an individual's internal drive to engage in specific actions towards achieving a goal. Pananrangi *et al.* (2020) assert that motivation drives individuals to pursue actions to accomplish their objectives. Consequently, the extent of motivation directly impacts employees in multiple ways (Stefurak *et al.*, 2020). As a result, motivation emerges as a critical element in achieving satisfactory employee performance and improvement (Maralani, 2016). The connection between the motivation of administrative employees and their job satisfaction is vital for the smooth functioning of government department service delivery (Gardi *et al.*, 2020).

This study aimed to explore the motivating factors that influence administrative employees in a selected government department by addressing three key research questions: What are the motivation levels of these employees? What intrinsic factors influence their motivation? And what extrinsic factors impact their motivation? The purpose of the research was to investigate the motivating factors that impacted administrative employees at

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a selected government department and was guided by the following objectives: to determine the motivation levels of administrative employees in a selected government department and to investigate the intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence administrative employee motivation in a selected government department.

Government administration includes a wide range of tasks and comprises people with diverse backgrounds, aptitudes and professional skills required to perform in the government sector (Adu-Oppong, 2014). Any person who is nominated for or appointed to a full-time administrative position is deemed an administrator. Mawudeku and Ankumah (2021) assert that administrative employees in government departments are essential to the smooth operation of these organisations since they manage the organisation's information, resources and records. This is in line with the South African government's Batho Pele principles, which emphasise accurate and easily accessible information, value for money and the effective use of resources to improve service delivery (DPSA, 1997). Administrative employees are adaptable, since no organisation can run without their assistance (Mogale *et al.*, 2021). Ademiluyi (2018) defines administrative employees as computer operators and personal assistants with a key role in running the organisation. Employees are important to any organisation and, as such, the organisation must support all the needs of employees, one of which is the need for motivation (Elvina and Chao, 2019). Motivation has been the topic of several studies due to its importance in employees' lives. The term "motivation" derives from the Latin word "*movere*", which means to encourage or to move (Neta and Haas, 2019). Onyango (2017) states that employees cannot deliver the necessary outputs without motivation.

Employee Motivation

Motivation is the power that allows someone to act toward a particular goal (Firda and Indahingwati, 2019). Motivation can be defined as a force that can help improve and maintain one's standard of behaviour (Jumady and Lilla, 2021). Douglas and Prentice (2019) further state that employees feel that their managers do not recognise or appreciate them for their contribution. According to Adanlawo and Nkomo (2023), employee motivation is how an organisation motivates employees to achieve organisational goals by offering incentives like pay, bonuses and awards (Pudjiastuti and Sijabat, 2022). Motivated employees are more oriented towards autonomy and freedom and are more self-motivated than less motivated employees, which causes development opportunities to benefit them (Demircioglu and Chen, 2019). Motivation is very important in the organisation because if there is high motivation, there will be high employee performance and vice versa (Elvina and Chao, 2019). Managers must be persuasive so that all employees can work together and sustain enthusiasm for completing tasks to achieve the organisation's goals (Erita *et al.*, 2021). There are two types of employee motivation – intrinsic and extrinsic (Fatahilla *et al.*, 2020). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are discussed in more detail below.

Intrinsic motivation is defined as doing something for the intrinsic satisfaction, pleasure or interest it offers (Andika and Darmanto, 2020). Intrinsically motivated individuals have the internal desire to complete a task or achieve a specific goal because they find it satisfying or fulfilling. Individuals are motivated by their values and interests rather than any outside influences (Ryan and Deci, 2017). Engidaw (2021) states that intrinsic motivation influences employee engagement and focuses on factors based on personal needs. According to Thalib *et al.* (2021), intrinsic motivation positively affects job satisfaction. Intrinsic motivation is related to satisfaction with oneself, which can be reflected by achievement, recognition, acceleration, work itself, responsibilities and personal growth (Mitchell *et al.*, 2020). Intrinsic motivation can be seen when an individual does an activity for self-satisfaction (Brown, 2019). For instance, the feeling of personal accomplishment is perceived as an intrinsic motivation. The Indeed Editorial Team (2022) states that as it helps employees reach their objectives, a sense of personal accomplishment greatly influences employee motivation. Employee recognition is another. This is an assessment of an individual's contribution to the work process, commitment and motivation (Triswanto, 2020). It entails assessing and recognising the work completed (Andika and Darmanto, 2020). Consequently, employee recognition highlights the importance of each employee's professional knowledge and experience while also evaluating his or her particular contribution (Arun, 2022). Employees must be recognised and complimented on their work to feel satisfied (Parker *et al.*, 2017). Managers showing appreciation towards employees, such as a monetary award when they do a good job, could reduce turnover (Siyanbola and Gilman, 2017).

However, if a monetary award is unavailable, managers can use recognition, which does not financially burden the organisation (Hoogveld and Zubanov, 2017). Although organisations can use intrinsic and extrinsic rewards to motivate their employees to achieve the organisational goals, this could harm the organisation when employees look for loopholes to attain the awards (Khan *et al.*, 2017). Employee empowerment (autonomy and responsibility)

is another form of intrinsic motivation which is perceived as giving employees the freedom and authority to make decisions that affect their jobs (Hanaysha and Hussain, 2018). It is the procedure by which employees are given the power to react immediately to clients' demands and problems (Shahid, 2019). Andika and Darmanto (2020) define employee empowerment as a component of human resources that includes undertaking meaningful work, feeling competent, being flexible while completing a job, participating in decision-making and applying leadership. Finally, training and development is also considered an important form of employee motivation. Shahid (2019) found that employees who felt their employer was committed to their professional development were more enthusiastic and motivated to excel at their jobs. Career development consists of enhancing individuals' work capabilities, which motivates them to accomplish the desired level of performance. To foster career development, the organisation requires employees to provide feedback through exemplary performance (Lis *et al.*, 2022). According to Brief and Aldag (2018), an intrinsically motivated employee performs better than an extrinsically motivated employee. Extrinsic motivation entails engaging in a task to obtain external rewards or avoid punishment (Ryan and Deci, 2017).

On the other hand, extrinsic motivation can be seen as encouragement that comes from outside the individual, which is why the individual carries out actions or activities to achieve what he or she wants (Triswanto, 2020). Employees find satisfaction in the feeling of significance and the general sense of accomplishment they derive from their work (Engidaw, 2021). Extrinsic motivation involves executing an action to achieve external rewards or reinforcements. Extrinsic motivating factors do not create a desire for the activity and the task is performed solely to gain a reward (tangible) or to avoid a punishment (psychological), according to Locke and Schattke (2019). Extrinsic motivation arises when there are triggering factors outside the employee's life, such as security, work conditions, company policy, status, compensation and interpersonal relationships (Mitchell *et al.*, 2020). Issues surrounding salaries, wages and other compensation benefits are in this category. According to Hanaysha and Hussain (2018), employees want to be paid a decent salary and they want their employers to consider the salary they receive appropriate for their work. To avoid unfavourable outcomes, organisations must pay their employees on time and sufficiently (Mustafa and Ali, 2019). Compensation ensures a minimum level of acceptable return. It is important for a company, in addition to what it pays, to find the behavioural motivations that will induce employees to make the most of their time and skills (Itri *et al.*, 2019). This will encourage employees and strengthen their devotion to the organisation (Ochola, 2018). To maintain employee motivation, the compensation of employees must be adequate and timely. If this is not the case, employees may become dissatisfied and perhaps leave the organisation for higher compensation (Moodley and Hove, 2018).

Rewards are another important form of employee motivation. According to Riener and Wagner (2022), a reward is a form of appreciation for professional employees who can meet their positions' requirements. A reward is an object, stimulus, event or outcome which is perceived as being pleasant and can, therefore, be reinforcing. Understanding the different needs of each employee can give the organisation a competitive advantage over other organisations (Mamun and Hasan, 2017). The work environment is another factor that can create a sense of enthusiasm for work (Hidayati *et al.*, 2019). The work environment is divided into physical and non-physical (Mustafa and Ali, 2019). The physical work environment includes all physical conditions in the workplace and every employee encounters them every day at work (Firmansyah *et al.*, 2020). Many organisations have not adequately considered the influence that the work environment has on employee motivation, despite this reality (Wang *et al.*, 2021). Managers and executives in certain organisations have downplayed or overlooked the significance of the workplace (Ochola, 2018). Job security is also an important factor. In fact, overall performance will inevitably increase if employees believe that they will be rewarded for their extraordinary work and that their employment is secure (Prabhu *et al.*, 2020). Van der Kolk *et al.* (2019) found that job security encouraged employees to put effort into meeting the organisation's objectives and gave them confidence in their future professional prospects.

Research Design and Methodology

This study followed a quantitative research approach, as it was numerical in nature and aimed at obtaining accurate and reliable measurements that would permit statistical analysis (Mohajan, 2020). The preliminary study adopted a survey research design with a sample size of $n = 20$ administrative employees using non-probability convenience sampling. The preliminary study results are part of an ongoing study; therefore, they are not intended to provide definitive conclusions but rather to test the reliability and validity of the research tools and methodology. The survey design enables respondents to offer perspectives or knowledge regarding a particular topic; surveys are also used

to explore and describe human behaviour in psychological and social research. The justification for choosing this design was that it was easy to undertake and incurred minimal costs. The aim of a survey is to obtain reliable and unbiased information from a representative group of interest (Li *et al.*, 2021). The design was applied in this study by adapting existing questionnaires to collect data from the sampled population (De Vaus, 2013).

The target population for this study included different categories of respondents' personal assistants, secretaries, senior administrators and data capturers who had been employed for at least three years and were perceived to have the relevant information to enable the researcher to assess the effect of motivation levels. The study used a closed-ended questionnaire to collect primary data. The questionnaires were emailed to respondents by a human resources officer, along with a link to the questions on Google Forms. To assess intrinsic and extrinsic motivation variables, the researcher adopted the Motivation Factor Questionnaire developed by Wiley (1997). Respondents' demographic information, including educational levels and work experience, was collected. Questionnaires were distributed using a Likert Scale with five response categories (Agree, Strongly agree, Neutral, Disagree and Strongly disagree) to establish the degree of agreement with the variables of interest in the study population. The questionnaires were distributed to respondents using a non-probability convenient sampling technique and collected for pilot analysis. The researcher used correlation and regression analysis to determine intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels. In the correlation analysis employee motivation was used as the dependent variable and intrinsic and extrinsic factors were used as the independent variable. To ensure the reliability of the data, all the questionnaires used in the research were the same for all respondents. A reliability analysis was performed to check the internal consistency of the responses and the researcher used Cronbach's alpha coefficient to test the internal consistency. The Cronbach's alpha test results showed an alpha value of 0.76, more significant than the required value of 0.50, indicating that the data collected for this study were internally consistent. To ensure the validity of data, this study adopted an existing validated questionnaire, and a statistician was consulted.

This study abided by the ethical considerations of the Tshwane University of Technology Research Ethics Committee by adhering to the following: (i) the researcher first obtained an ethical clearance letter from the Tshwane University of Technology Research Ethics Committee; (ii) permission to conduct the research was requested from the selected government department; (iii) the researcher ensured that the respondents were not required to identify themselves by their names on any documents; and (iv) the respondents were informed that they were free to withdraw at any time during data collection.

Results and Discussion

The following section delves into the outcomes derived from the research study, providing in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data collected. The discussion critically evaluates the findings and presents a comprehensive overview of the results and the research objectives. The demographic data examined for this study included respondents' work experience and academic qualifications, as explained in the following discussions.

Table 1: Respondents' educational level

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Educational level	Lower than Grade 12	0	0	0
	Grade 12	1	5.26	52.63
	Certificate(1-year qualification)	0	0	0
	Diploma (3-year qualification)	1	5.26	47.37
	Bachelor's degree/BTech/Advanced diploma	8	42.11	42.11
	Honours degree/Postgraduate diploma	4	21.05	73.68
	Master's degree/MTech	5	26.32	100
	Doctoral degree/DTech	0	0	0
	Total	19	100	

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents (42.11%) had a bachelor's degree/BTech/advanced diploma, while 26.32% held a master's degree followed by an honours degree (21.05%); the rest (5.26%) had other qualifications, such as certificates. Bachelor's degrees dominated the academic qualifications within this department. This suggests a potential prerequisite for entry or career advancement within the government department and might influence the types of tasks, responsibilities or opportunities available to individuals with varied educational backgrounds. It implies that most administrative employees in government departments are reasonably educated, as the administrative profession requires professional training.

Table 2: Respondents' work experience

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative percent
Work experience	3-10 years	13	68.42	100
	11-20 years	4	21.05	21.05
	21-30 years	2	10.53	31.58
	31-40 years	0	0	0
	More than 40 years	0	0	0
	Total	19	100	

Table 2 shows that 68.42% of respondents had 3-10 years of work experience in the administrative field, while 21.05% had 11-20 years and 10.53% had 21-30 years of work experience, with none falling within the 31-40 years or more than 40 years of work experience categories. The near-even split between respondents with 11-20 years of experience and those with 21-30 years suggests a workforce with a balanced mix of relatively new and moderately experienced employees. In addition, the significant proportion of employees who dedicated six to ten years of service to the organisation testifies to their loyalty and commitment. Their years with the department show a deep understanding of its values, processes and objectives. Likewise, this timeframe is pivotal: employees solidify their dedication and make meaningful contributions to the organisation's culture and success.

This distribution could influence organisational stability, knowledge transfer and the presence of fresh perspectives and seasoned expertise within the organisation. No less than 89.47% of administrative employees had work experience above three years. The survey respondents' demographic profile analysis revealed a diverse workforce across various factors such as educational levels and years of work experience. This diversity could positively impact the organisation's innovation, problem-solving approaches and creativity by integrating different perspectives and experiences. The prevalence of bachelor's degree holders suggests a minimum educational threshold for certain positions. In contrast, the presence of master's degree holders indicates avenues for advanced career growth or specialised roles within the government department. This fosters a culture of continuous learning and skill enhancement. Motivation will keep the employees committed to their duties and help them do their jobs diligently and joyfully. Figure 1 illustrates levels of employee motivation at a selected government department.

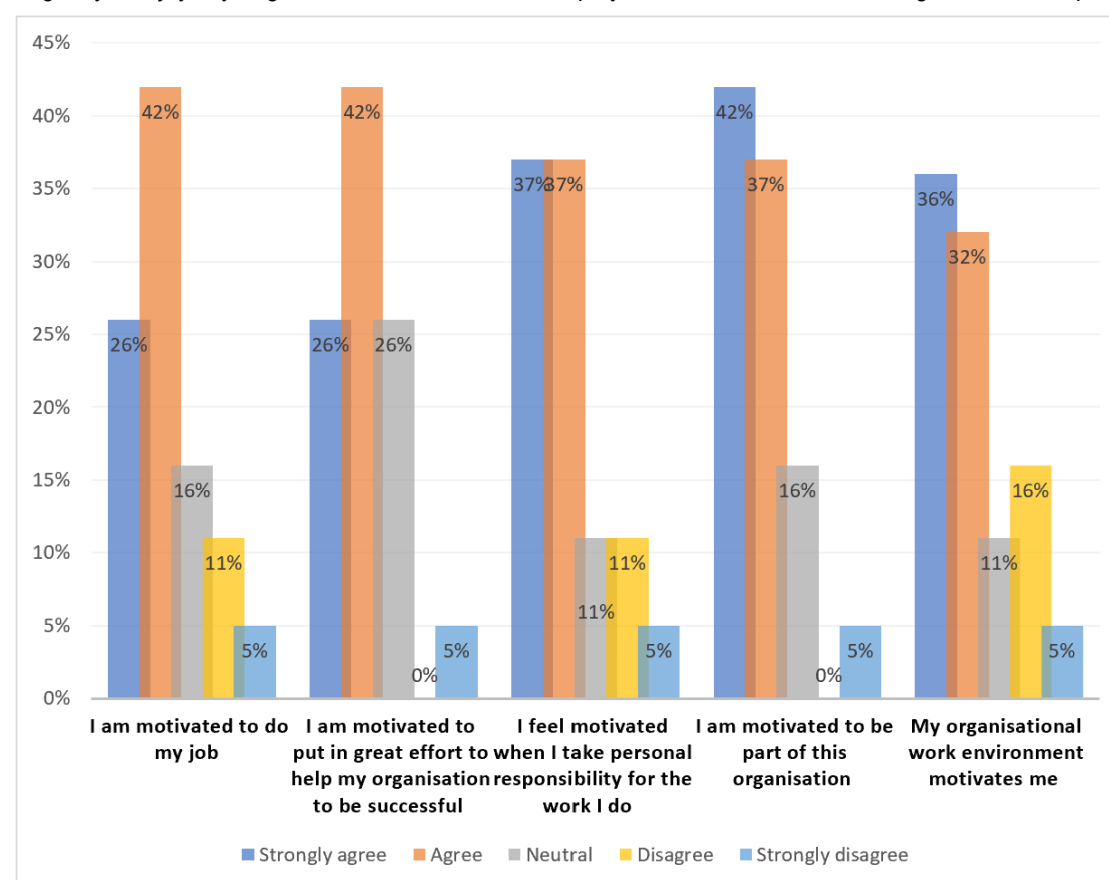

Figure 1: Employee motivation

Figure 1 above shows respondents' motivation levels in terms of factors of employee motivation. Overall, 42% of respondents "agreed" and "strongly agreed" with the above statements. Statements 1 and 2, "I am motivated to do my job" and "I am motivated to put in a great effort to help my organisation to be successful", had the highest overall percentage of 42%, which means that the employees were motivated to put great effort into their work. Statement 5, "My organisational work environment motivates me", had the lowest overall percentage of 32%, which means that the work environment did not motivate employees. It can be observed from the above definitions that motivation, in general, is more or less concerned with factors or events that move, lead and drive human action or inaction over a given period given the prevailing conditions.

Furthermore, the definitions indicate that an "invisible force" is required to motivate others to do anything to give back. It is also possible to conclude from the definitions that having a motivated workforce or establishing an atmosphere in which high levels of motivation are maintained remains a problem for modern management. This problem may stem from the mere fact that motivation is a dynamic phenomenon that may alter in response to personal, psychological, economic and societal changes. Furthermore, Al Kaleedy (2018) states that employees flourish when given demanding duties, which is consistent with the strong motivation reported among government department employees regarding the nature of their work. This implies that employees are highly motivated when their jobs are tough and stimulating, demonstrating the importance of task diversity and challenge in increasing motivation. Furthermore, Hue *et al.* (2022) emphasise the need to provide suitable tools and equipment, which is consistent with the availability of essential resources in government department offices. Despite being the lowest-rated factor, the availability of sufficient supplies and equipment indicates that the organisation prioritises employee convenience and job efficiency, which contributes to motivation and productivity; hence, it is critical to motivate employees in a variety of ways. Employers can also give incentives through monetary bonuses, performance-based promotions, flexible work arrangements and non-monetary rewards, such as vacation packages and training opportunities. Incentives can take various forms, such as salaries and wages, as illustrated in Figure 2.

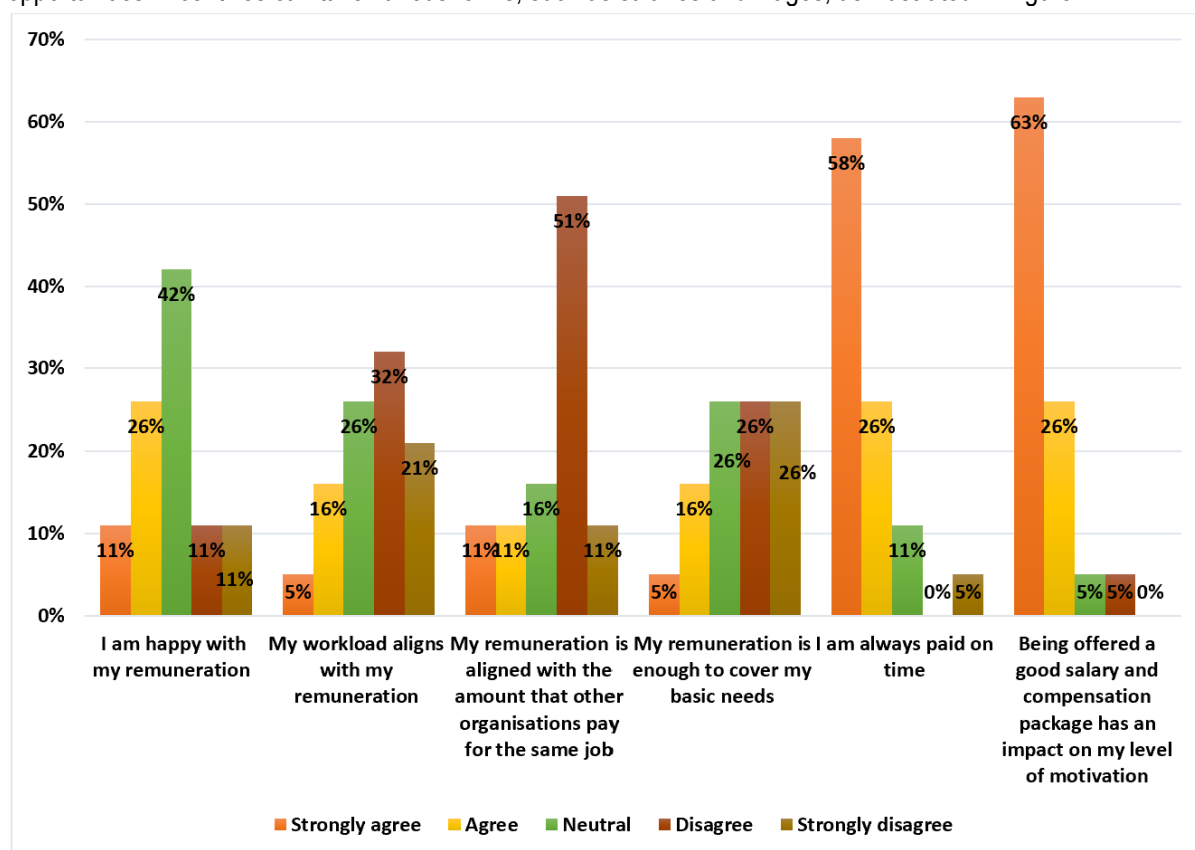


Figure 2: Salaries and wages

Figure 2 above shows respondents' motivation levels in terms of salary and wages. It is shown that overall, respondents "strongly agreed" with the above statements, with an overall percentage of 60%. Statement 6, "Being offered a good salary and compensation package", had the highest overall percentage, 63%, which means that

the employees greatly valued having a good salary and benefits at their workplace. Statement 2, "My workload aligns with my remuneration", had the lowest overall percentage (5%), which means that the employer's pay did not equal the effort the respondents made. Having a competitive salary and many benefits hugely impacts the level of employee motivation in the workplace. An employer that can provide a good salary and abundant benefits will be able to secure hardworking and motivated employees. There is no consensus about the role of money as a motivator. Some studies confirm that money is a good motivator, while others have found that money is not a motivator. As a result, monetary awards may be undervalued as a motivator in the workplace. Agarwal's (2010) study, based on a literature review on motivation and executive salary, yielded similar findings about the relevance of money as a motivator. In his perspective, money is still the most important driver for employees to do well at work. He believes that intrinsic rewards motivate chief executive officers, but money appears to become more important at some point in their careers. Agarwal extends his observations by stating that long-term incentives are less successful than short-term, performance-based rewards. This is due to the risk and uncertainty that come with long-term incentives. Incentives significantly increase productivity in various businesses and fields by fostering a motivational atmosphere (see Figure 3).

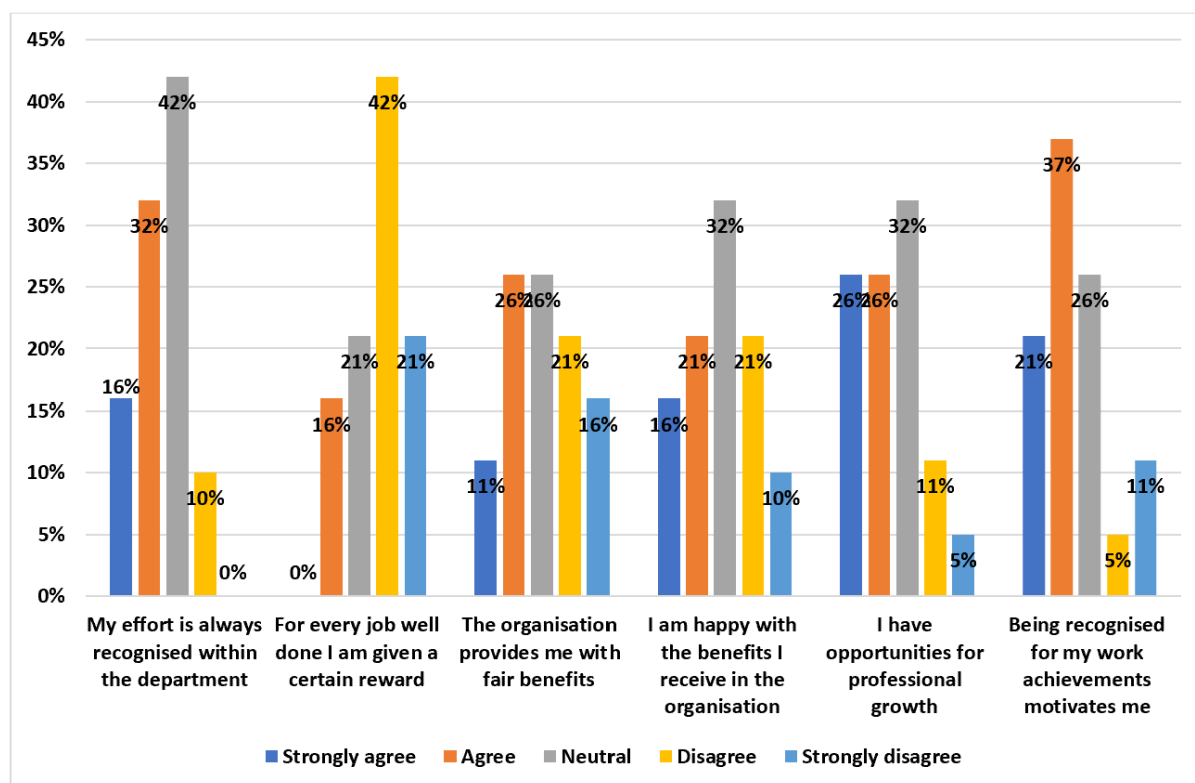


Figure 3: Incentives and rewards

Figure 3 above shows respondents' motivation levels in terms of incentives and rewards. Overall, respondents were "neutral", which shows that respondents were uncertain about their responses. Statement 1, "My effort is always recognised within the department", had the highest percentage (42%), which indicates that whenever the respondents' efforts were recognised, the respondents felt more motivated in their workplace. Statement 2 had the lowest overall percentage (21%), which shows that respondents were neutral with regard to rewards for every job well done in the workplace. The study's respondents strongly preferred things like fair benefits, opportunities for professional growth and recognition outside the workplace, which enhanced their overall job motivation. According to DeWitt (2022), 80% of employees would rather have a job with incentives than one that pays 30% more but does not offer any extra benefits. Employee satisfaction and productivity might suffer from a lack of incentives because employees become preoccupied with personal, family and financial matters. They struggle to focus cognitively and would rather work for an organisation that offers excellent incentives than one that pays more. Devika (2021), in support of the study's findings, highlights the importance of financial incentives and showing appreciation of achievement-oriented employees. This is consistent with research findings from government departments to the effect that highly motivated employees experience satisfaction when their accomplishments

are recognised and appreciated. This recognition gives them a sense of success, validates their work and keeps them motivated. Additionally, research conducted by Pancasila *et al.* (2020) verified that acknowledging employees' incentives and accomplishments amplified their motivation, emphasising the significance of achievement in the government department as a critical component of employee motivation. Motivation factors collectively suggest high employee satisfaction regarding working environment (see Figure 4 below).

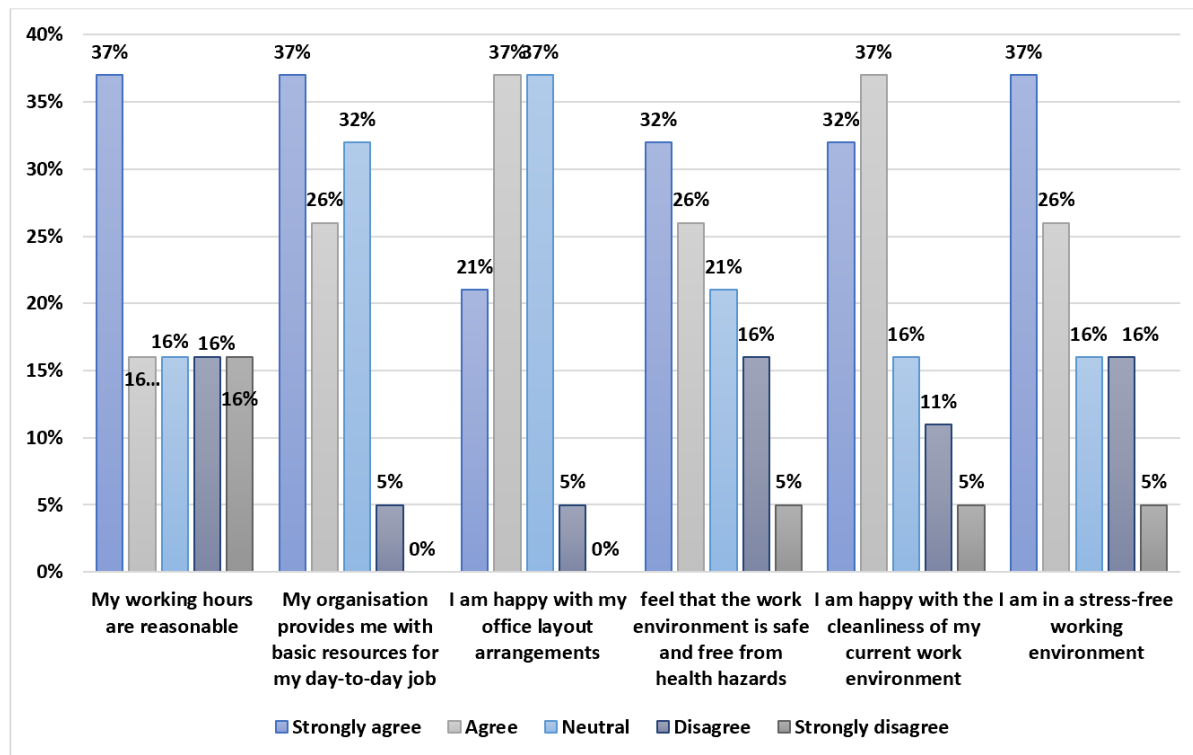


Figure 4: Working conditions

Figure 4 shows respondents' motivation levels in terms of working conditions. Overall, 37% of respondents "strongly agreed" with the above statements. Statement 6, "I am in a stress-free working environment", had the highest overall percentage (37%), which means that the employees greatly valued having a stress-free working environment, while statement 3, "I am happy with my office layout arrangements", had the lowest overall percentage (21%), which means that the office layout was not conducive to effectiveness and productivity. The findings in the working conditions domain reflect a positive view of the workplace environment within government departments. The high percentage scores for feeling proud to work in a stress-free environment illustrate that employees perceived their workplace favourably. These scores suggest that the organisation provided conducive and comfortable working conditions, fostering a sense of pride and satisfaction among employees. The consistency in high scores indicates a positive consensus among employees regarding the quality of their working environment, emphasising the importance of a pleasant and comfortable workplace within the organisation. In accordance with these findings, Bashir *et al.* (2020) point out how work environments impact job satisfaction and performance, supporting the notion that good working conditions lead to employee satisfaction. This is confirmed by Mustafa and Ali (2019), who investigated how work conditions influenced employee behaviour, satisfaction and performance and found a significant impact on numerous employees' work experiences. A study conducted by Lis (2022) showed that employee satisfaction and productivity might be negatively impacted by unfavourable aspects such as mental health and sick leave. This is consistent with the idea that attitudes towards the workplace markedly impact employee dedication and total output. Employee performance, productivity and well-being are all strongly influenced by the work environment, as shown by Wang *et al.* (2022). This supports the notion that employee performance is to a great extent influenced by stress, anxiety and physical well-being and that job productivity is positively correlated with satisfaction with the work environment.

The results depicted above can be interpreted as follows: Training and development, working conditions and career development possibilities performed reasonably well based on employee feedback, but there was still much room

for improvement and adjustment. Compensation rules were identified as a key element influencing employee motivation, with the lowest satisfaction score and comparable ratings for recognition and appreciation procedures. It may be argued that the organisation should balance financial and non-financial incentives.

Conclusion

Many studies have concluded that productive and successful employees benefit the organisation. Because of this, motivation is the key component of any organisational structure and fosters an atmosphere that allows and encourages people to do their best. Organisations must be more inventive and creative to succeed in today's economic environment, which can only be achieved with dedicated and devoted employees. Any organisation's ability to succeed is influenced by various factors, but its employees have the most impact. An organisation may accomplish its aims easily if its employees are driven by organisational objectives. Any manager's responsibility in an organisation is to get things done through the employees, and to achieve this the manager needs to motivate them. In the workplace, motivation is crucial – without it, job satisfaction and productivity suffer. Employee motivation strategies vary, depending on the organisation and the individual employee. They may also play a significant role in an employee's decision to remain with the company or resign. The theory and practice of motivation are two distinct and challenging fields that affect every aspect of every organisation. A limitation of the study is that the findings were based on the preliminary study only. The data were collected from one government department, limiting the generalisability of the findings. Therefore, future researchers could conduct similar studies in both public and private organisations to guarantee that the findings are relevant and generalisable.

Declarations

Interdisciplinary Scope: The article demonstrates an interdisciplinary approach by integrating insights from management, psychology, public administration, and human resource development to explore employee motivation in a government department. This approach provides a well-rounded understanding of how both individual and organisational factors influence motivation.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation, literature review (Harmse and Bhuda), methodology (Harmse and Bhuda), analysis (Harmse and Bhuda), investigation (Harmse and Bhuda), drafting and preparation (Harmse and Bhuda), review and editing (Harmse and Bhuda). All authors have read and approved the final published version.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Funding: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Availability of Data: All relevant data are included in the article. However, more information is available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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