



Exploring the Conceptual Relationship between Motivation and Employee Optimal Performance in the Manufacturing Industry in South Africa

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Abstract: The objective of this study was to explore the conceptual relationship between motivation and employee optimal performance in a manufacturing industry in South Africa. To achieve this objective, an exploratory literature review approach to research was employed, where information and deliberations on employee motivation, optimal performance, and the manufacturing industry were obtained from journals and publications of previous scholars, both local and international. This study's findings revealed a significant positive impact of financial motivation, which includes salary increases, cash allowance, bonuses, and retirement benefits, with employees' optimal performance in South Africa. Similarly, non-financial motivations such as position promotion, the award for recognition, training, and development, and involvement in decision-making were also ascertained to significantly positively impact employees' optimal performance in manufacturing industries in South Africa. Previous literature was also found to agree that many employees agreed that award of recognition can stimulate employees to perform optimally in their job deliverables. It was recommended that organisations such as manufacturing industries should employ both financial and non-financial motivations as identified in this study to enhance employee optimal performance.

Keywords: Employee Motivation; Optimal Performance; Manufacturing Industry

JEL Classification: J24; J33; M52; M54

1. Introduction and Background

Employee performance refers to how well employees accomplish their goals and priorities (Neher & Maley, 2019). According to Wood, Park, and Kim (2020), motivation and employee performance have recently become more interesting to researchers and practitioners. These terms have been defined in different ways by many researchers. Thus, Babjohn and Neelophertaj (2018) posit that every organization in the world has its own way that is unique from others in terms of motivating its employees, this implies that if a manufacturing industry motivates its workers in a manner that they are satisfied with their job (considering the nature of their work), it will result in optimal performance, which will result to increased productivity.

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According to Kumari, Barkat and Abbas (2021), motivation informs an employee's willingness to accomplish the organization's goals. Ali and Anwar (2021) the term motivation is what makes the employees work hard to improve optimal performance to achieve their job responsibilities. Therefore, researchers Kumari et. al. (2021) and Ali and Anwar (2021) agreed that motivation simply refers to the process of stimulating people towards accomplishing the set organizational goals. Managers in any organisation are responsible for getting things done through other employees (Mbukanma, 2022; Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). A good manager must know how to motivate employees to improve their performance, leading to higher organizational productivity. According to Anwar and Abdullah (2021), employee performance is based on many factors, out of which motivation is important. Paillé and Morelos (2019), the term employee motivation refers to how an employee's attitude towards their responsibilities in an organization is influenced and how well they perform the duties you have obligated them.

Motivation is important in any organisation, whether small or large enterprises, people need to be motivated to accomplish their duties and meet organizational goals. With this background information, Talbi and Ouared (2022) stated that the term motivation is the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. Jayarathna (2014) argues that there are a few challenges managers face in any organization, including how to motivate employees to do their work and the motivational strategies that can be used to accomplish the organization's goals. Most employees feel comfortable with their work when managers motivate them, especially when they have performed their tasks very well (Mbukanma & Strydom, 2022). Many organisations worldwide have their own way of motivating employees to carry on their tasks towards optimal performance. According to Ali and Anwar (2021) employee motivation and optimal performance are the most significant concepts to every organization, as productivity results from employee optimal performance.

Yuliyanti, Sudjanto and Santosa (2021) posit a positive motivational effect on a person that helps improve his/her performance, which could come in the form of financial or non-financial motivation. Thus, financial motivation is a financial form that companies provide to encourage their employees to improve their performance, leading to higher productivity (Kumari, et. al, 2021). In contrast, non-financial motivation is the non-financial type used by companies to encourage their employees to improve their performance (Colic, et. al, 2022). Perhaps for manufacturing industries to sustain productivity growth, they need well-motivated employees. According to Delfino and van der Kolk (2021), well-motivated employees require less supervision to accomplish the tasks delegated by their managers. Greater firm productivity results from optimal performance, which can only be accomplished if all employees are properly motivated financially or non-financially. Hence, the study aimed to explore the conceptual relationship between motivation and employee optimal performance in the manufacturing industry in Eastern Cape, South Africa.

2. Rationale and Objective of the Study

The lack of proper motivation has been identified as the cause of why some workers abandon their jobs within an organization. However, other workers stick around because they like the benefits offered by the organization, such as bonuses and rewards for a job well done. Both Kalogiannidis (2021) and Manganye and Mbukanma (2021) stress the need to encourage workers to do better in the workplace. According to Brevis and Vrba (2014), the word "motivation" describes what prompts an individual to work towards the goals of an organization. According to some writers like Bawa (2017),

motivation is what drives an individual to take the necessary actions to accomplish their objectives successfully. Employee performance is defined as “how employees behave in an organization and how well tasks are performed as delegated by upper management”, as stated by Virgiawan, Riyanto and Endri (2021).

According to Kalogiannidis (2021), scholars have increasingly focused on the relationship between employee motivation and organizational effectiveness. Employees in both the public and commercial sectors recognize the importance of motivation in boosting productivity (Inayat & Jahanzeb, 2021). However, there is a gap in the existing research about how motivation improves employee performance and alternative methods for achieving optimum employee performance in manufacturing industries. Although several studies have highlighted the value of employee motivation, not much research has been done on the manufacturing sector. Because of this gap, several incentive methods have existed, with varying effects on productivity. Considering the potential of employee motivation, it is probable that researchers will continue to integrate and reconcile the most doubts around the efficiency of motivation towards enhancing employee optimum performance within organizations, particularly the manufacturing sector. Therefore, this research aimed to explore the conceptual relationship between motivation and optimal employee performance in Eastern Cape, South Africa manufacturing industries.

3. Research Methodology

Research methodology is the procedures and philosophical concepts used when undertaking research (Kumer, 2019). The strategy defines the tools utilized in the investigation (Yang & Tate, 2012; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The instruments are the tools used by the researcher for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data. As King and He (2005) mentioned, conceptual-based research incorporates several research methodologies, including narrative review, vote counting, meta-analysis, exploratory review, and descriptive review. An exploratory literature study was carried out. This necessitated collecting and synthesizing easily available research on a certain issue. Bennison, Miller, Summers, Minnis, Sussman, McGuinness (2017), and Burns (2017) stressed the importance of this sort of literature review in presenting to the reader the findings of earlier research that are directly relevant to the current topic. Therefore, this research reviewed the existing literature, conferring with and acknowledging the contributions of local and international schools within the ambit of employee motivation, optimal performance, and the manufacturing industry. Thus, the exploratory literature review technique used in this research helped establish academic logical thoughts on the conceptual interface between motivation and employee optimal performance in Eastern Cape, South Africa manufacturing industries.

4. Theoretical Foundation to the Study

Motivation concepts were formed around the 1950s; the current study is conceptualized based on two motivational theories: Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory and Herzberg’s two-factor theory. According to Mallett (2021), the theory is a well-developed principle developed to explain the aspect of the natural world. These theories have explained why things happen rather than predict and describe. The theories will be discussed as follows.

4.1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

According to Tahir (2021), psychologist Abraham Maslow developed Maslow's hierarchy of needs in 1943. There are two important assumptions the theory of Maslow is based on; the first one is that people always want more, and their needs depend on what they already have. Unsatisfied people need to impact their behavior, but a need that has been satisfied is not a motivator. Second, People's needs are identified in terms of their importance: when someone's need has already been satisfied, the other one will come forward to be satisfied. According to Dwivedi (2021), Maslow identified five levels of the hierarchy of needs: physiological, security, social, esthetic, and self-actualization.

Physiological Needs - Brevis and Vrba (2014) describe Physiological needs in an organization. These five hierarchies of needs are categorized according to their levels and include wages, salaries, and working environment. Physiological needs are also defined as the basic needs of life, for example, food, shelter, water, physical drive, sexual desire, and oxygen. These needs can be unsatisfied, but employees can satisfy them. Employees negotiate for an increase in their wages and require a better conducive working place to ensure that their members' needs are satisfied.

Security Needs - According to Vermote, Waterschoot, Morbée, Kaap-Deeder, Schrooyen, Soenens, Ryan, and Vansteenkiste (2022), Once the physiological needs of a person have been satisfied, security needs must be considered. Security is needed mostly in the workplace; every employee must feel safe in their working environment; for example, the organization must implement some CCTV cameras and also use fingerprints for entry. The following are individual needs for security, job security, insurance, medical aid schemes, and pension schemes.

Social Needs – According to Babjohn (2018), social needs include the need for friendship and love. Employees join diverse groups in an organization to meet or satisfy their social needs. Combining group work and teams and the interaction of employees and managers in an organization can ensure that the organization meets its employees' social needs. Joining a group that will benefit the organization is especially important to meet an employee's social needs.

Esteem Needs - According to Oshitani (2022), the esteem need is self-respect and recognition by others as the higher-order need. Examples of esteem needs are the need for success and appreciation of achievement. Some managers can play a significant role in satisfying the needs of their employees, for example, they reward the high achievement of employees based on their performance with recognition and appreciation for their decent work.

Self-actualization Needs - Valliani (2021) The last step of Maslow's hierarchy of needs is self-actualization, a higher-order need. Self-actualization is the full development of an individual's potential. In an organizational context, the need for self-actualization is mostly difficult to satisfy. Self-actualization is the development and realization of one's full potential. Maslow sees this level as what humans look like or can be; this means that they should be or become everything that they can become. Self-actualization need enables the organization to improve worker commitment and retention.

For the purpose and content of this study, either small or large organisations should apply Maslow's theory to their employees' security and physiological needs. Managers should encourage employees of the organization to form groups for their social needs to be satisfied, and they can create a better, conducive environment in which the highest order needs like self-actualization and esteem needs of the employees can be satisfied. Abraham Maslow identified this theory for employees to be satisfied

and well-motivated in their actions. Bear in mind that there are diverse ways of motivating employees; there are bonuses and promotions at work, but overall, Maslow Abraham suggests that employees in any organization should be satisfied.

4.2. Herzberg's Two-Factor Motivation Theory

Frederick Irving Herzberg developed Herzberg's two-factor theory during the 1950's. Herzberg conducted the study, interviewing about 200 engineers to know if they were negative or positive towards their work. Herzberg identified two factors that are very much influenced in motivating employees. Motivation factor: According to this theory, employees of the organisation are motivated and given appreciation such as bonuses for their improved performance.

Employees here require little or no supervision towards their work because they are being given a free environment, and that is what motivates them to put extra effort into their work. These factors include recognition, responsibility, and sense of achievement. Hygiene factors: In this factor, employees do not receive any kind of motivation regarding their work. Hygiene factors are the factors that cause motivation in an organisation. The factors include supervision, working conditions, salary, and interpersonal relationships. For the content of this study, the two-factor theory's contribution to our understanding of motivation in the workplace is Herzberg's focus on the importance of the work itself in motivating the employees, which led to an interest in job enrichment. The motivational factor plays a significant role in motivating employees to accomplish the organization's goals.

5. Empirical Literature Review

The word motivation comes from the word "motive", which means needs, desires, wants, or drives within the individual (Jam-Jam & Mbukanma, 2023). Motivation is the process of initiating employees to act to attain the goal of the organisation (Suzuki, 2021). According to Gaur and Rajendra (2021), the term motivation is the process that initiates, guides, and maintains goal-oriented behaviors. Based on the above views of Gaur et. al. (2021) and Suzuli (2021) the term motivation simply means the process of motivating individuals to take action to achieve a goal. According to Sharma (2020), motivation can also help an employee attain his or her personal goals.

Every organization, whether small or large organisation, has diverse ways of motivating its employees. According to Silas and Ukpong (2022), the term motivation in an industry is a way of persuading people to behave in a good manner to achieve the organization's common objectives. Ali and Anwar (2021) argued that motivation is the most important in every organisation and is defined as the process of giving incentives to individuals to act and attain organizational goals. According to Jose, Minh, Ullah and Sadiq (2021) motivation has a significant role in encouraging someone to do the work to achieve their personal or group, or company goals. In the setting of a manufacturing industry, motivation is defined as emotional factors that can encourage their own to do some work to achieve or fulfill their personal needs and desires, groups, and organizations. According to Friday, Ntirandekura, and Muhindo (2022), all forms of motivation are categorized into two, which are financial motivation and non-financial motivation.

5.1. Financial Motivation

According to Manzoor, Wei and Asif (2021), financial motivation is defined as the process of providing monetary incentives to employees to motivate or reward them for better achievement. Many organisations are using a financial motivation to improve the performance of work and financial motivation includes:

Salary and Allowances - In every organization, the salary and allowances given to the employees are from financial incentives. The increase in salaries and allowances form a part of motivation for the employees to improve their job performance. The salary system is considered the most used increment because it is based on the employee's performance during the year.

Bonus - Bonuses are the extra reward that is added to the basic salary, as a reward for satisfactory performance. It is mostly in the form of cash, gifts, and paid vacations. The uniqueness of bonuses is that, in most cases, organizations or companies grant their workers bonuses during the festive time.

Retirement Benefits - Every organization provides certain retirement benefits to its employees, such as pensions, gratuity, and provident funds. This provides a sense of security and stability for the employees.

5.2. Non-Financial Motivation

According to Anjum, Islam, Choudhury and Saha (2021), non-financial motivation is not in the form of financial terms given to an employee. Non-financial motivation typically costs little money to the company, they include the following:

Position Promotion - A promotion is the movement of an employee from a lower-paying or lower-status job to a higher-paying or higher-status post. The workers get a psychological lift from the increased status that comes with increased power, authority, and responsibility. An individual's desires for self-respect and self-actualization may be met by even the most basic kind of advancement.

Award for Recognition - Recognizing someone's efforts and successes shows your admiration for them. An important non-monetary driver has been acknowledged. To encourage their staff, upper-level managers should publicly acknowledge their excellent work.

Training and Development - Workers are encouraged to further their education and professional development to boost productivity. An untrained manager of an organization may lack the knowledge, expertise, and experience necessary to foster growth in productivity and morale. Employees may be inspired to work harder thanks to the positive effects of training on their self-esteem, their ability to perform better in their jobs, and the likelihood of advancement within their companies.

Involvement in Decision-Making - Involving workers in policy and decision-making gives them a sense of ownership of the company and encourages them to contribute to its success. Managers often include their employees in the decision-making process, since this increases the pressure on workers to provide better results. Workers with a voice in organizational matters are more likely to feel empowered to address common workplace issues and work together to find workable solutions.

6. Conceptual Dimension of Motivation in Manufacturing Industries

The term motivation is synonymous with stimulating, inspiring, and inducing employee to perform to their best capacity. Aliyyah, Prasetyo, Rusdiyanto, Endarti, Mardianah, Winarko, Chamariyah, Mulyani, Grahani, Rochman and Kalbuana (2021) stated that the term employee performance is defined as what an employee can do through their ability, skills that result to achievement. According to Kalogiannidis (2021), Good motivation can strengthen commitment and lead to improved performance which can lead to increased productivity (Prasetyo et. al, 2021). If employee motivation can be linked to the reason for the work, the spirit and happiness of the employee can be good. Arguably, the employee's performance is considered good only if they do what is expected to be done. Employee performance includes the quality and quantity of output, and the presence at work (Suzuki, 2021). Although, they have been evidence of some factors that affect employee performance as detailed below, but motivation as posit by Gaur et. al. (2021) and Suzuli (2021) energies employees to overcome these challenges and work towards achieving optimal performance.

Clear Goals and Expectations - Before anything else, it is crucial that workers understand exactly what is expected of them, what their roles are, and how they might best go about completing the assignments provided to them by their superiors. This implies that the company's policies and procedures for completing assignments should be made clear. It is critical that workers have a transparent understanding of the organization's goals. When a worker has clear direction, he or she is more likely to succeed in reaching their objectives.

Lack of Motivation and Incentives - When someone is not motivated, they do not have the will to provide their absolute best effort. Employee performance may be severely hindered if they lack the intrinsic motivation to work towards the organization's stated objectives. The ability to motivate oneself is crucial for getting things done. At the very least, employees should be interested in doing their work. Both internal and external sources of motivation are possible. Some workers have enough intrinsic drive to succeed even without external rewards. However, many workers cannot give their all without financial incentives like wages, bonuses, and allowances.

Tools and Resources - Workers in every company must have access to enough resources if they are to do their duties effectively. Even if a worker has all the drive, intelligence, and experience in the world, they will not be able to get their work done in the time allotted if they do not have access to the tools they need.

7. Hypothetical Relationship Between Motivation and Employee Optimal Performance

A hypothesis is a statement that explains a phenomenon or predicts how variables should relate to one another (von Krogh, Roberson & Gruber, 2023). The importance of a hypothesis in a research study is trying to find out the relationship between one or more variables and draw logical conclusions.

Relationship between Financial Motivation and Employee Optimal Performance

The financial motivation variable influences employee optimal performance. As such, this is proven by previous studies (Din, et. al, 2021). However, previous studies like Kalima and Kabubi (2021) stated clearly that Many organisations are using financial motivation to improve work performance, namely salary increases and cash allowances, bonuses, recognition awards, and retirement benefits. According to Kalogiannidis (2021) money is not considered as a good motivator, but not giving it at

all may show negative results in an organization. However, Hechbaia, Tchilaia, Holetiani and Muskudiani (2020) agree that giving employees incentives when they perform their tasks well is not a waste of time but just a motivator to work towards accomplishing the organization's long-term goals. Based on the above scenario, the following hypothesis was established.

H1: *There is a positive relationship between financial motivation and employee optimal performance.*

Relationship between Financial Motivation and Non-Financial Motivation

The financial motivation variable has an influence on non-financial motivation. However, this has been proven by prior studies by Sayed, Matloob, Shah, and Ahmed (2021) on the effect of financial motivation and non-financial motivation on employee performance in selected private organizations. Previous researchers, such as Birhanu (2022), clearly stated that financial motivation influences non-financial motivation. As such, non-financial motivation is not paid directly to employees but is provided training to learn skills and acquire new knowledge, and they usually involve them in decision-making, so employees are motivated. However, Chien, Mao, Nergui, and Chang (2020) argue that financial motivation has little influence on employee optimal performance. As such, the empirical findings indicate less significance on employee optimal performance. Based on the above scenario, the following hypothesis was established.

H2: *There is a positive relationship between financial motivation and non-financial motivation.*

Relationship between Non-Financial Motivation and Employee Optimal Performance

Non-financial motivation has little influence on employee optimal performance (Manjenje & Muhanga, 2021). Manjenje and Muhanga (2021) argue that most organisations prefer financial motivation to their employees, such as bonuses, promotions, and salary increases. However, Ali and Anwar (2021) when a firm gives employees non-financial motivation, including training and development, reward, and recognition, and involving them in decision making. Tumi, Hasan, and Khalid (2022) agree that non-financial motivation is the way of motivating employees by giving them training for them to acquire new skills and new knowledge and involve them in making decisions such employees can be more motivated. Based on the above scenario, the following hypothesis was established.

H3: *A positive relationship exists between non-financial motivation and employee optimal performance.*

8. Key Findings and Managerial Implications

This study aimed to explore the conceptual relationship between motivation and employee optimal performance in a manufacturing industry in South Africa. The key findings of this study were derived from the three tested hypotheses. The study's managerial implications and key findings are outlined to inform key decision-making. However, the following managerial implications should, therefore, be considered by management and stakeholders of the manufacturing industries in South Africa.

- From the literature review it is stated clearly that many employees agree that award recognition motivates them and affects their performance. This means that award recognition could be a powerful tool used to motivate employees, especially in manufacturing industries, to perform exceptionally.

- The findings of the study revealed that financial motivation (Such as Salary and allowances, bonuses, and retirement benefits) has a positive relationship with employee optimal performance; this means that if financial motivation is used as the form of motivation within manufacturing industries, employee optimal performance will increase in a positive direction.
- The findings also support that those who received individual financial motivation tend to perform better than those who did not receive any motivation.
- Although non-financial motivation received less argument from different scholars, it is significant on employee optimal performance was evident; this means that if the employees can be involved in decision-making, given training and development, the employee optimal performance will increase positively.
- The findings support the idea that a positive association exists between financial and non-financial motivation. As such, the findings have revealed that there is a relationship among them.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The main objective of this study was to explore the conceptual relationship between motivation and employee optimal performance in a manufacturing industry in South Africa. The conclusion is derived from the findings of the study. However, this study has been able to arrive at some findings and will recommend the following: This study aimed to explore the conceptual relationship between motivation and employee optimal performance in manufacturing industries in Eastern Cape, South Africa. A review of the literature was done, and a theoretical foundation was discussed, where two theories were identified to have underpinned the study. The conclusion is derived from the exploratory findings of the study. This study focused on the relationship between financial motivation, non-financial motivation, and employee optimal performance. Based on the results, financial and non-financial motivation has a positive relationship with employee optimal performance. Uniquely, non-financial motivation, such as employee involvement in decision-making, training, and development, significantly contributes to employee optimal performance. Therefore, this study has successfully mitigated the identified problem by developing conceptual evidence on the relationship between motivation and optimal employee performance. As such, it is recommended that organisations such as manufacturing industries should employ both financial and non-financial motivations to enhance their employees' optimal performance. However, the study also developed conceptual evidence on the relationship between non-financial motivation and employee optimal performance. As such, it is recommended that non-financial motivation such as (position promotion, award for recognition, training, development, and involvement in decision-making) should be incorporated into the structure of the organization to enhance the employee's optimal performance, this means that if the employees of manufacturing industries can be involved in decision making, given training and development, their optimal performance will increase in a positive direction.

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