

Status of intrinsic motivation of the white-collar employees: Is everyone equally motivated?

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Cite this paper

Bhattarai, G., & Shah, K. (2021). Status of intrinsic motivation of the white-collar employees: Is everyone equally motivated? *NCC Journal*, 6(1), 43-50.

<https://doi.org/10.3126/nccj.v6i1.57815>

Abstract

As white-collar employees are more concerned and value the job's intrinsic aspects, this study concentrated on the intrinsic motivation of white-collar employees. This study was dedicated to measuring the general status of the intrinsic motivation of different groups of gender, age, education, experience, and designation. Moreover, this study was dedicated to measuring whether there are differences in intrinsic motivation between and among various groups of employees in terms of their demography (i.e., gender, age, education, experience, and designation). Data were collected among the white-collar employees working in the Nepalese insurance industry. Cross-sectional and perceptual data was analyzed using SPSS. Three hundred fifty-eight responses were analyzed quantitatively. This study measured that white-collar employees working in the insurance industry were intrinsically motivated. Male employees were more intrinsically motivated than female coworkers. Old-aged employees' intrinsic motivation was higher than younger employees. Likewise, this study revealed that employees' intrinsic motivation within the education, experience, and designation groups was similar. Different practical and theoretical implications and directions for future research are suggested.

Keywords: Motivation, Intrinsic motivation, Demographic aspects, Mean differences

Introduction

Motivation is a multifaceted concept; one accepted method is essential to consider the many aspects of motivation are internal and extrinsic sources of each person's motivation. The intrinsic is derived from the work itself, while the extrinsic is derived from hopes for benefits from other sources (Cho & Perry, 2012). When people receive highly valued experiences via their employment, they are motivated intrinsically, as opposed to extrinsic motivation, based on rewards and punishments managed by the organization. A person becomes enthusiastic, interested, devoted, and invigorated in their job due to these pleasant experiences. Since intrinsic motivation enables individuals to become self-managing or self-leading, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) contend that it is the crucial psychological component of employee empowerment. Intrinsic motivation has been shown to substantially impact workers' attitudes and performance, among other forms of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Without a doubt, the advantages of piece-rate arrangements or performance-based rewards tools might be seriously jeopardized once the schemes undercut employees' intrinsic drive, according to Benabou and Tirole (2003). This research focuses on intrinsic motivation since it considers it a necessary result of a person's subjective perception. In a broader career context, managers have learned that cherished ways of doing business do not work anymore due to the need to adapt to technological innovations and the fact that the psychological contracts of large numbers of unskilled employees are negatively associated with their professional commitment (Dahal et al., 2020; Rajbhandari et al., 2020; Bhattarai et al., 2020).

White-collar and blue-collar workers differ greatly based on their employment characteristics and behavior; the former occupy higher-level occupations, while the latter do not (Spiegelaere et al., 2012). Blue-collar workers tend to place more importance on extrinsic variables like rewards or job security than white-collar workers do on the intrinsic aspects of their jobs. How each group values various parts of a career varies (Locke, 1973). According to surveys, the main motivators for blue-collar workers are extrinsic employment elements like job stability and rewards. White-collar workers appreciate the intrinsic benefits of their jobs, such as their autonomy and the significance of their work (Centers & Bugental, 1966). According to Friedlander (1965), white-collar workers prioritized intrinsic task variables over social-environmental ones like security, workgroup, and coworkers. These intrinsic task variables included achievement, challenge, and application of abilities. White-collar professionals were more likely to place intrinsic satisfaction, skill use, and job interest in the top three criteria, according to Centers & Bugental (1966). Blue-collar workers, on the other hand, were less likely to rank salary, coworkers, and security in that order.

According to the self-determination hypothesis, internal motivation is influenced by social and environmental factors (Grouzet et al., 2004). If the environment impacts intrinsic motivation, social and environmental factors will also affect the motivation's antecedents and outcomes. Therefore, it may not be possible to extrapolate the results from the Western environment to the Nepali situation. In the least developed countries like Nepal, the study has not been carried out till now. Hence, this study was dedicated to measuring: (a) the level of intrinsic motivation of white-collar employees and (b) how employees' demographic aspects (i.e., gender, education, experience, designation, age) affect the intrinsic motivation of white-collar employees.

Literature review

Intrinsic motivation

Although intrinsic motivation was researched as early as the 1950s, Deweet's work helped the concept gain popularity. (2007). Deweet provided a theory of self-determination that differentiates between intrinsic drive and extrinsic motivation depending on the many causes of an event.

Intrinsic motivation encourages someone to adopt or modify a habit for internal fulfillment or happiness. It is often self-applied and results from a direct connection between the person and the circumstance. In other words, intrinsic motivation is when a person is motivated by their interest or delight in the activity rather than by external pressure or a desire for reward. Benabou and Tirole (2003) conceived intrinsic motivation as the individual's desire to perform a task for its own sake. Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination approach to motivation defines intrinsic motivation as the drive to engage in activity only for the enjoyment and satisfaction it brings. These positive emotions result from meeting our intrinsic demands for competence and autonomy (Kuvaas, 2009). According to Deci et al. (1989), intrinsic motivation is a psychological state in which an employee finds the activity appealing and enjoys and feels satisfied after finishing the task.

Because the activity challenges their current competencies and calls for using their creative talents, intrinsically driven people believe they are engaging in the activity willingly. People who are intrinsically driven get joy and inherent satisfaction from the activities they engage in (Vallerand, 1997).

According to Vignaswaran (2008), intrinsic motivation helps workers become self-managing or self-leading, which fosters a high degree of self-knowledge, self-awareness, and personal accountability, improving workers' output. Research in sports and educational contexts also supports intrinsic motivation's role as a performance predictor. (Kuvaas, 2006b). It is readily claimed that genuinely driven people may do well at work if they excel in academics and sports. Because individuals are driven internally rather than via external incentives or recognition, intrinsic motivation stands out as the most potent influence on employee attitudes and performance (Cho & Perry, 2012).

According to research by Frank and Lewis (2004), intrinsic motivational factors correlate more strongly with self-reported job effort than extrinsic ones. According to Karatepe and Tekinkus' (2006) analysis of Turkish front-line banking employees, high levels of intrinsic motivation led to increased work performance. The association between intrinsic motivation and job performance was quite significant in a study of PA among bank workers in Norway, ranging from tellers to managers. (Kuvaas, 2006b). Similarly, research by Vignaswaran (2008) and Fakharyan et al. (2012) found a good correlation between intrinsic motivation and workers' productivity. Therefore, it has been proposed that there might be a beneficial association between intrinsic motivation and workers' job performance and other good outcomes based on the ideas above and associated study findings. Thus, the following research question was prompted by this study.

- What are the levels of intrinsic motivation among different demographic groups of employees?
- Are there significant differences in the level of intrinsic motivation within the groups of demographic variables?

Research methods

Variables operationalization and measures

The multi-item measures employed in this study were all modified from earlier research. Five previously created measures were combined to assess the various components needed for this investigation. Several researchers have utilized these measures in earlier research projects, and they have been confirmed to be valid and reliable for assessing the investigated components. Responses were scored on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5, with one (1) suggesting strongly disagreement, two (2) denoting disagreement, three (3) expressing neither agreement nor disagreement, four (4) signifying agreement, and five (5) denoting neither strongly agreement nor disagreement.

Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is defined as the motivation that arises due to the characteristics of the assigned job itself, where the job becomes a more challenging, interesting, enjoyable, meaningful, enriching attitude, and driving force itself to perform. Intrinsically driven people are less concerned with the organization's financial success but are self-reliant and self-reliant. The assessment of intrinsic motivation included six items created by Cameron and Pierce. (1994). Researchers Hsu (2012), Kuvaas (2006b, 2009), and Vignaswaran (2008) have all employed this technique, and they have reported coefficient alpha values between .82 and .90.

Demographic variables

Demographic variables (e.g., sex, age, education, experience, and designation) of the employees were taken into consideration as per the purpose of the study. For statistical analysis, demographic variables have been coded as gender (male = 0, female = 1), age in the year (below 30 = 1, 30 to 50 = 2, 50 and above = 3), education (under-graduation = 1, graduation = 2, post-graduation = 3), experience in years (below 5 = 1, 5 to 10 = 2, 10, above = 3), designation (assistant = 1, officer = 2, manager = 3, executive = 4).

Sample and sampling design

Fifteen insurance businesses were chosen from the insurance industry using the quota (stratified and non-random) selection technique. Four provided life insurance, ten provided non-life insurance, and one provided both life and non-life-insurance. Two stratum phases have been distinguished to choose the sample firms. First, based on the kind of business (e.g., 'life insurance company, non-life insurance company, and both life and non-life insurance company'), 'life insurance and non-life insurance businesses were separated into three strata

according to the quantity of business. (Examples of high, medium, and low-level premium collecting businesses). For the ease of the researcher, companies from the designated stratum were picked. A convenience sample of 358 respondents from the chosen firms was polled.

Administration of the questionnaire

Six questions and five demographic characteristics are included in the questionnaire. Perceptual answers for all questions have been collected on a 5-point Likert-type scale, except for the demographic data. A questionnaire in English with a Nepali translation has been created to make it easier for the participants. In particular, the researcher translated and had two other researchers, whose first language is Nepali, examine it. The questionnaire's wording, clarity, and simplicity were also reviewed by three individuals equivalent to the respondents in this study. The chief executive officers of every chosen sample company were asked to have their staff take part in the study to administer the questionnaires. The CEO of each business designated a referral person to help with questionnaire distribution and collection at the researcher's request. Each responder received a unique set of 550 questions with the aid of a reference person. 417 of the 550 questionnaires that were sent were completed and returned. However, only 358 (65%) questionnaires were discovered to be usable for the study's objectives.

Results

On a 5-point Likert scale, Table 1 shows that the average intrinsic motivation of the workers in the insurance sector in Nepal was 3.82 with a standard deviation of .75. There were various degrees of intrinsic motivation across the various age groups, ranging from 3.78 to 4.22 with a standard deviation of .62 to .76. Comparatively, workers under 30 years old had the lowest level of intrinsic motivation (3.78), those between 30 and 50 years old had a mid-level (3.79), and those over 50 years old had the greatest level (4.22). With a rise in employee age, levels of intrinsic motivation have grown. The degrees of intrinsic motivation also varied among the education level groups, ranging from 3.80 to 3.83 with a standard deviation of .69 to .81. In terms of intrinsic motivation, graduates had the lowest level (3.80), postgraduates had the middle level (3.82), and undergrads had the most significant level (3.83). The relationship between employees' intrinsic motivation and educational attainment was U-shaped.

Table 1
Mean and Standard Deviation of Intrinsic Motivation According to Demographic Variables

Group	N	Intrinsic Motivation	
		Mean	S.D.
Age in years			
Below 30	125	3.78	.76
30 - 50	210	3.79	.75
Higher than 50	23	4.22	.62
Academic status			
Undergraduate	64	3.83	.81
Graduate	170	3.80	.78
Postgraduate	124	3.82	.69
Work involvement (experience in years)			
Below 5	143	3.78	.74
5 -10	96	3.74	.79
Higher than 10	119	3.93	.75

Group	N	Intrinsic Motivation	
		Mean	S.D.
Official position (designation)			
Decision-making (executive)	9	4.05	.68
Supervisor (manager)	59	3.97	.78
Officer	129	3.84	.77
Assistant	161	3.73	.73
Total	358	3.82	.75

As shown in Table 1, various degrees of intrinsic motivation across the various employee groups, according to experience in the insurance sector, ranged from 3.74 to 3.93 with a standard deviation of .74 to .79. Employees with five to ten years of experience had the lowest level of intrinsic motivation (i.e., 3.74), those with less than five years had the middle level (i.e., 3.78), and those with more than ten years had the greatest level (i.e., 3.93). Level of intrinsic drive and years of experience tended to follow a U shape. There were various degrees of intrinsic motivation among the workers depending on their designation, ranging from 3.73 to 4.05 with a standard deviation of .68 to .78. Their degree of intrinsic motivation has grown with the advancement in their designation's level. Executives had the most significant degree of intrinsic motivation (i.e., 4.05), managers had the second-highest level (i.e., 3.97), officers had the second-lowest level (i.e., 3.84), and assistants had the lowest level (i.e., 3.73).

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviation of Intrinsic Motivation According to Gender

Sex	N	Intrinsic Motivation		t- value
		Mean	Standard Deviation	
Male	208	3.91	.76	2.58**
Female	150	3.70	.73	

** , t- value is significant at the .01 level

The intrinsic motivation of the male and female workers, as shown in Table 2, was 3.91 and 3.70, respectively, with a standard deviation of 0.76 and 0.73. The degree of intrinsic motivation among male workers was higher than that of female employees.

According to the results shown in Tables 1 and 2, there were mean variations in intrinsic motivation within and between groups for each demographic characteristic. To determine the statistical significance of the mean differences, the t-test (for variables belonging to only two groups, like sex) and ANOVA test (for variables belonging to three or more groups, like designation) were computed.

Table 3
ANOVA Outputs of the Various Demographic Groups for Intrinsic Motivation

Group	Intrinsic Motivation	
	F	Sig.
Age	3.49*	.031
Education	.04	.975
Experience	1.95	.143
Designation	1.81	.145

The t-value for intrinsic motivation is shown in Table 2 and was 2.58 (p .001). This suggests that the mean intrinsic motivation of male and female workers differs statistically significantly.

The p-value of the F test for each demographic variable relating to intrinsic motivation was more than 0.05, except for age, as shown in the ANOVA result in Table 3. These results indicate that, except for age, mean

variations between groups' intrinsic motivation under each demographic category were not statistically significant.

Age had an F value of 3.49 in Table 3 with a significance level of .031 (p .05), showing that there were statistically significant mean differences across the different employee age groups. The last stage was to identify the groups with the mean intrinsic motivation differences between them. In order to determine which groups within the employee age categories had the mean differences regarding intrinsic motivation, posthoc analysis was calculated.

Table 4
Multiple Comparisons of the Mean Difference of the Intrinsic Motivation, According to Age Groups

	Groups	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	
Age	Below 30 Years	30 to 50 Years	-.01	.08	.91
		More than 50 Years	-.43*	.17	.01
	30 to 50 Years	More than 50 Years	-.42*	.16	.01

*, the mean difference is significant at the .05 level

According to Table 4, the mean differences between the intrinsic motivation of workers in the age groups of 30 to over 50 years were -.43 and were statistically significant at the .01 level (p .05). Similarly, there was a -.42 difference in mean age between workers with 30 to 50 years and those with more than 50 years. It had a .01 level of significance (p.05). These show that there are average disparities in intrinsic motivation between workers under 30 and those over 50. A statistically significant difference was seen between workers over 50 and those between 30 and 50. Mean levels of intrinsic motivation did not vary significantly among various age groups of workers.

Discussion

This study indicated that the average level of intrinsic motivation was more than 50%, suggesting they are generally internally motivated. This study finds that male employees were intrinsically more motivated than female employees. Compared with females, males are more goal-oriented, prefer challenging work, and easily accept negative feedback to attain the goal. Therefore, male employees are intrinsically highly motivated than their female counterparts. Similarly, higher-aged employees were highly intrinsically motivated than lower-aged coworkers. This finding is similar to the conclusion of Kooij et al. (2008). Motivation among older employees may be higher for a variety of reasons, including the fact that many of them have worked for many years because they like their jobs, benefit from the opportunity to use their honed expertise, experience a feeling of personal fulfillment via their work, and relish the freedom to use their imagination. Likewise, this study finds no mean differences between groups of education, experience, and designation. In the case of education, this finding shows consistency with the prior results of Lu (1999).

Conclusion and implications

This study revealed that male employees were more intrinsically motivated than their female coworkers. Older employees were highly intrinsically motivated than younger employees. This indicates that male employees value the job context and nature more than female employees. Likewise, more senior employees' morals are more motivational than younger employees'. Hence, an organization can design (or redesign) jobs that assign challenging and creative jobs to male and older employees. Because intrinsically motivated employees are more creative and interested in handling challenging jobs.

Similarly, this study revealed that employees' intrinsic motivation within the education, experience, and designation groups was similar. This indicates that whether employees are highly educated or less educated, highly experienced or less experienced, higher position holding or lower position holding, they are equally intrinsically motivated. Hence, an organization can ignore these factors while intervening to enhance employees' intrinsic motivation. Theoretically, further study can be carried out under different contexts investigating other underlying causes for employees' intrinsic motivation due to demographic factors like gender, age, designation, age, experience, etc. So that theory can be refined for generalization.

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