

Exploring Employee Motivation in Consulting Firms - An Empirical Analysis

¹Nancy Rao; ²Urvashi Sharma; ¹Vaishali Narolia

¹Research Scholar in Department of Commerce at Delhi School of Economics,
University of Delhi, India

²Professor in Department of Commerce at Delhi School of Economics, University of
Delhi, India

Abstract: Due to expanding global markets, employees have the greater choices and autonomy to switch their jobs quickly as compared to earlier generations. Hence managers are left with no alternative but to develop right strategies to foster employee commitment and motivation (Pauliene et al., 2025). Individuals are different not only in their work values and wants but also in their demographic attributes of sex, qualifications, age group, income etc. which resulted in variation in the work ethics and desires of the employees (Kurose, 2015). Though there has been enough evidence to support the significance of motivation still the studies focusing on motivation of employees in consulting sector remains limited. This study will explore the motivation of employees in consulting firms in India with respect to extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors and also the influence of demographic characteristics on motivation of employees. The data was collected from 257 employees working in top 5 consulting firms in India, using well structured questionnaire and simple random sampling. According to results of the study, all 15 factors motivate the employees to some extent, with salary the top most motivating factor for the employees amongst all other factors of motivation. The findings also revealed that work motivation is affected by the gender, qualification, marital position, age, designation and income. This study presents a comprehensible framework for researchers', managers, experts and policymakers to understand the factors motivating the employees and adopt the right strategies for motivating each employee (Al Araimi, 2002; Engidaw, 2021).

Keywords: Employee Motivation; Demographic Characteristics; Motivational Factors; Consulting Firms

Introduction

The concept of motivation is not new. Over the years, enormous amount of applied research has been done in the field of motivation by many scholars around the globe. "Motivation signifies an unfulfilled need which produces a state of tension or disequilibrium, triggering the individual to move in a goal directed pattern towards reinstating a state of equilibrium by satisfying the need" (Viteles, 1953). Managers are required to give the right incentives to their employees in order to make them put their best efforts with zeal and optimism which lead to improvement in their

performance at the workplace. The amount of their efforts will largely be dependent upon their expectation for receiving the rewards. Both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors have to be given to the employees so that they put the right behaviour at the task or job, without which their performance cannot be enhanced (Liaquat et al., 2024). If an employee remains demotivated they will put minimal efforts on their tasks, stay away from the workplace, if chance arises they will resign from the company and produce substandard work. Conversely, the ones who are stimulated are more persistent, imaginative and efficient giving high quality efforts (Engidaw, 2012). It is generally not viable for the owners to accomplish their organizational goals without the support of their employees which states that employees are important asset for any company. Consequently, managers are trying to look out for means to inspire and enhance the work motivation of employees (Vo et al., 2022). Individuals are different not only in their work values and wants but also in their demographic attributes of sex, qualifications, age group, income etc which resulted in variation in the work ethics and desires of the employees (Kurose, 2015). Therefore this study will explore the motivation of employees in consultancy firms in India with respect to extrinsic and intrinsic factors of motivation. Though there has been enough evidence to support the significance of motivation still the studies focusing on motivation of employees in consulting sector remains limited. Enough studies with regard to motivation of employees has been done in western countries, however doubts persist with regard to application of these findings on different cultural perspective. The study aims to provide a clear framework for researchers' experts and policymakers to know the factors motivating the employees (Al Araithi, 2002) there is not enough literature available exploring the influence of various kinds of incentives on motivation of workforce in consulting sector. Majority of earlier studies have investigated the role of only financial incentives leaving scope for future research to analyse the financial incentives against non financial incentives effectiveness (Vesal & Rahmati, 2024). Employees who are motivated demonstrates a sense of responsibility which leads to their enhanced performance, also they develop a sense of commitment and belonging towards the organisation and its objectives (Badu, 2005). Motivated workforce is likely to be more vigorous as a result their absenteeism with turnover also declines (Kyambade et al., 2024). Motivation has a strong connection to emotions as it decides the extent to which a person will be engaged physically and mentally (Juma Michilena et al., 2024).

Factors of Motivation

Need hierarchy theory by Maslow's gives a sequential structure of wants, starting from lowest basic needs to highest level of self actualization needs, individual will have to satisfy the needs at every subordinate level before moving on to the next upper layer needs (Talamayan et al., 2024). Extrinsic rewards are tangible financial benefits in form of bonus, salary, premium for overtime etc for basic survival (Aldabbas et al., 2025). Extrinsic motivation encourages the employee to do a task because he expects

rewards and benefits. Employee is said to be intrinsically motivated when he desires to do the task because he finds it enjoyable and fulfilling and not because of any kind of pressure from outside or rewards (Mahmoud et al., 2021). Intrinsic motivation makes the employee enjoy the task he does which inspires him to dedicate more efforts and enthusiasm to their work thus resulting in improved performance (Ahmed et al., 2024). Motivation Hygiene theory by differentiates between intrinsic factors of motivation from hygiene factors. Intrinsic factors include sense of achievement, recognition, nature of work, while hygiene factors include salary, policies, supervision, working conditions etc. (Stringer et al., 2011). Motivated employees are essential for the organisations to survive and improve their productivity in order to cope up with the fast evolving workplaces (Crumpton, 2013). Managers too will have to comprehend what factors drive their employees in relation to the task they perform, in order to be successful (Conrad et al., 2015). Motivating the employees requires understanding what drives them to take up the new action, sustain the efforts in the task and dedicate mentally on the task (Conrad et al., 2015). Herzberg's factors of motivation confirmed by Harvard business review are divided into two categories of intrinsic factors like, sense of achievement, recognition, advancement, nature of work while extrinsic factors includes policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relationships (Forson et al., 2021). Equity theory is found on the belief of how an individual believes that he has been treated fairly in relation to others. If perceived fairness, motivation will be higher and vice versa (Bhatti et al., 2016). Expectancy theory by Victor Vroom's believes that workforce is stimulated to give their efforts when they feel that their efforts will lead to performance which will be rewarded (Sdrali et al., 2016). Leaders can only enhance the motivation only if they comprehend the factors which stimulate the employees. Motivated workforce lean to be more committed and contented about their jobs, thus letting the supervisor to develop accurate approaches for enhancing the motivation of workers (Campos-García & Zúñiga-Vicente, 2019).

Review of Literature

"Motivation refers to a set of energetic forces that originates both within and beyond an individual to initiate work-related behaviour" (Lazauskaite-Zabielske & Bagdziuniene., 2015). Motivation significantly influences the individuals and their organisation, since motivated employees start promoting the brand of the company thus enhancing the brand image and contributing to expansion of the business (Voloshchenko & Nikolaeva, 2024). Motivated employees not only assist the organisation in realising its goals but also improve the contentment of the employees. The process of motivating employees is not simple process; it requires the right strategies to guide their actions towards fulfilling the organisational objectives along with their personal expectations (Madzík et al., 2025). Organisations should keep their employees motivated in order to improve their productivity leading to better performance outcomes. Since due to expanding global markets, employees have the greater choices and autonomy to switch their jobs quickly as compared to earlier

generations. Hence supervisors have no alternative but to develop right strategies to foster employee allegiance and motivation (Pauliene et al., 2025). Behaviour of the employees is determined by various intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. Managers are required to acknowledge that employees are motivated not just by extrinsic rewards but also by intrinsic factors (Liewendahl & Heinonen, 2020). Intrinsic motivation arises from the factors innate in the job itself and which the individual get pleasure from as a outcome of effectively finishing the task or accomplishing his targets (McCormick & Tifflin, 1979). When we are discussing about motivation it becomes important to differentiate between types of motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the force of a person to engage into a task because he finds it engaging and feels pleasure doing it while extrinsic motivation makes a person engage into a task due to the outcome or rewards attached to it (Ryan & Deci, 2000). (Mundhra, 2010) studied intrinsic motivation of the officers employed in private and public sector companies in Indian service sector. Perceived competency had insignificant influence on their on the whole performance while perceived independence and relatedness were having reasonable to significant influence on their whole performance. (Morrell, 2011) studied the benefits of non-monetary incentives used for motivating and rewarding the employees. It was found that non-monetary incentives lead to improved employee engagement, increased level of motivation leading to cost savings for the organisation. (Cho & Perry, 2012) explored how intrinsic motivation impacts the employee attitudes considering three factors of supervisory credibility, goal directedness with extrinsic incentive expectation. The findings confirmed that intrinsic motivation impacts together employee contentment and their intention to resign (Belle & Cantarelli, 2014). (Mottaz, 1985) studied overall satisfaction across occupational groups namely professional, managerial, clerical staff, service and blue collar workers. The findings showed that extrinsic organisational rewards influences work satisfaction of lower level occupations more as compared to upper level ones. (Bhatia, 1985) examined a research to identify the intensity of job motivation of executives in terms of their opinion for job content factors like recognition, work-itself, responsibility, opportunity for growth and advancement to which majority of executives were found to be satisfied. (Mishra & Gupta, 2009) explored the job motivators used by Indian retail firms to encourage their front line employees and improve their satisfaction and it was found that compensation, working conditions, supportive management were the foremost factors affecting their satisfaction. The purpose of paying employees is to enhance the financial wellbeing by compensating for the work done by them. Employees receive compensation in form of financial like salary, bonus, allowances and non financial benefits like tours, holidays, training etc (Nguyen et al., 2024). Work motivation is enthusiasm and readiness of the individual to put his best efforts into achieving the organisational objectives (Nguyen et al., 2024). This study aims to study motivation in consultancy firms in India with respect to certain extrinsic and intrinsic factors of motivation. For our study top five consulting firms namely "Accenture, E&Y, Mckinsey, TCS, Deloitte" have been selected

since they represent the consulting industry in India to a larger extent. We have formulated the subsequent research questions and hypothesis:

Research Questions

Q1 Is salary the primary motivating factor for employees?

Q2 what is the influence of demographic characteristics on motivation for employees in consulting firms?

Hypothesis

H₁: All 15 factors motivate the employees.

H₂: Salary is the most significant motivating factor for employees in consultancy firms

H₃: There is significant association between gender, relationship status, age, designation, educational qualification, monthly income of employees of consulting firms with regard to factors of motivation

H₄: There is significant influence of gender, relationship status, age, designation, educational qualification, monthly income of employees of consulting firms on factors of motivation.

Methodology

Sample and data compilation

The primary data was collected from top 5 Indian consulting firms through a survey method using a well designed Questionnaire through simple random sampling. The questionnaire was outlined on the basis of five point Likert's scale where 1 means "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree". Demographic information of the respondents is contained in first part of the questionnaire while the second section is related to 15 extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors. A sum of 305 questionnaires was circulated from which 257 completed ones were taken back and 48 were discarded.

Participants

Table 1 is representing demographic profile of the respondents on the basis of gender, age, relationship status, education level, designation and salary. The sample comprises of 47.9% males and 52.1% of females. Out of the all the respondents 12.5% were below 25 years of age, 24.5% between 25-35 years, 7% of the employees belong to group of 36-45 years and 19.8% respondents were above 45 years of age. With respect to relationship status, 36.2% were unmarried employees while 63.8% were married employees. With respect to educational background, 37.7% of the respondents were under graduates, 33.1% were post- graduates and remaining 29.2% were professionally qualified. As far as their designation is concerned 23.3% of the respondents were working at top level, 45.9% at middle level while 30.7% of the remaining respondents were working as lower level employees. With regard to the monthly salary, 21 % of the

respondents were getting their monthly salary below 30,000, 26.8% between Rs. 30,000-45000, 17.9% between Rs. 45,001-60000, 11.3% of the between Rs 60,001-75,000 and remaining respondents of 23% were getting salary above Rs.75, 000.

Table 1: Demographic distribution

Category	Subcategory	No. of respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	123	47.9
	Female	134	52.1
Age Group	Under 25	32	12.5
	25-35	63	24.5
	36-45	18	7
	Above 45	51	19.8
Relationship status	Unmarried	93	36.2
	Married	164	63.8
Education Level	Undergraduates	97	37.7
	Postgraduates	85	33.1
	Professional Qualifications	75	29.2
Job Designation	Top-Level	60	23.3
	Middle-Level	118	45.9
	Lower-Level	79	30.7
Salary	Below 30,000	54	21
	30,000-45,000	46	26.8
	45,001-60,000	59	17.9
	60,001-75,000	0	11.3
	Above 75,000	0	23

Data Analysis

Hypothesis H₁ and H₂ are tested by applying “descriptive analysis and one sample t-test”. Firstly, the average of each motivational factor was calculated using SPSS 17.0. After that, “one sample t-test” was run to assess whether the average of each motivation factor exceeded three, which implies that the “the factor sometimes motivates the respondents”. The factors which had p-values lesser than 0.05 would be characterized as motivators; otherwise they will be taken as factors which are ineffective as motivators in consulting firms. Last of all, each motivator was ordered on basis of their average score. The factor with the maximum mean was considered as the highest significant motivator; followed by the motivator with the second largest average score, and so on. This way we would not reject hypothesis if “good salary” was ranked as the most significant motivating factor and vice versa.

Analytical tests like chi square, descriptive statistics, two samples t-test, one-way ANOVA have been used to examine (H₃ and H₄) if personal characteristics influences the motivation of employees in consulting firms.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 represents descriptive data analysis of all fifteen motivation factors. The lowest value and highest value of all the fifteen motivational factors are 1 and 5; correspondingly, apart from participation having least value of 2 which signify that no respondent believed that this factor ever motivates them. The following table clearly displays that the average value of each of the fifteen motivational factors is more than 3.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of motivation factors

Factors	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Ranks	Std. Deviation
Salary	1	5	4.13	1	1.116
Supervision	1	5	3.67	10	.768
Interpersonal rel.	1	5	3.87	2	.664
Teamwork	1	5	3.81	4	.775
Work Environment	1	5	3.73	8	.898
Welfare	1	5	3.49	12	.787
Promotion	1	5	3.32	14	1.027
Performance Appraisal	1	5	3.84	3	.963
Training & Development	1	5	3.68	9	.931
Opportunity for Growth	1	5	3.77	5	.919
Job Autonomy	1	5	3.75	6	.998
Recognition	1	5	3.50	11	.748
Participation	2	5	3.48	13	.731
Grievance Handling	1	5	3.29	15	.706
Equality	1	5	3.74	7	1.102

This represents that all fifteen factors have the potential to motivate the employees. “One sample t-test” was passed at a 95% confidence range in order to assess if the average score of each motivational factor is greater than three. The test results showed that all the fifteen factors have the p-values of 0.000. Since p-value is lesser than threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis will not be accepted. Hence, there is strong statistical proof at the 5 % level of significance to say that all the fifteen factors can motivate employees. After that, we ranked these factors on basis of their average value. The result that good salary is the most motivating factor for employees in

consultancy firms is not surprising, since the average score of good salary is the highest with 4.13. The sequence of ranking of other motivational factors is interpersonal relations with (mean of 3.87) followed by performance appraisal with (mean of 3.84), teamwork (mean= 3.81), opportunity for growth (mean= 3.77), job autonomy (mean=3.75), equality (mean= 3.74), work environment (mean=3.73), T&D (mean= 3.68), supervision (mean= 3.67), promotion (mean=3.32), grievance handling (mean=3.29).

Hence, the hypothesis of good salary being the primary motivational factor for employees in consulting firms gets supported.

To test the second hypothesis, the influence of demographic characteristics on motivation of employees' chi square test, descriptive statistics, two sample t-test, one-way ANOVA.

Table 3: P-values of chi square test

Factors	Gender	Age	Relationship status	Education	Mthly Income	Designation
Salary	.000	.000	.032	.004	.010	.003
Relation with supervisor	.750	.681	.845	.180	.282	.181
Interpersonal rel.	.239	.404	.623	.033	.060	.746
Teamwork	.036	.193	.448	.440	.620	.065
Work Environment	.066	.001	.049	.032	.231	.023
Welfare	.296	.027	.296	.072	.433	.561
Promotion	.001	.106	.313	.467	.002	.051
Performance Appraisal	.703	.015	.243	.646	.235	.000
Training & Development	.252	.101	.017	.186	.023	.045
Opportunity for Growth	.221	.099	.027	.022	.050	.000
Job Autonomy	.268	.022	.257	.017	.021	.001
Recognition	.901	.220	.486	.046	.190	.010
Participation	.760	.831	.847	.822	.117	.054
Grievance Handling	.350	.002	.356	.112	.037	.012
Equality	.000	.000	.248	.001	.000	.000

We used χ^2 test to check the null hypothesis, that there is no considerable relationship among demographic profile of employees like gender, age, relationship status, education, designation, monthly income, and motivation as shown in table 3. The null hypotheses were discarded when p-values were below 0.05, they are emphasised in the table in italics. The results showed that there is a significant association between gender and salary, promotion, teamwork, equality. An association has been found between age and salary, work environment, welfare, job autonomy, performance appraisal, grievance handling, equality. Relationship status has an association with salary, work environment, opportunity for growth, training and development. Education has an association with salary, work environment, interpersonal relations, opportunity for growth, job autonomy, recognition; equality. Monthly salary was found to be related with salary, promotion, training and development, job autonomy; equality. Designation has an association with salary, work environment, performance appraisal, T&D, opportunity for growth, job autonomy, recognition, grievance handling; equality.

Two sample t-tests between the motivational factors and every demographic attribute with gender and relationship status at 95 % confidence interval were selected. The p-values of these two sample t-tests are presented in the table below. The null hypothesis gets discarded if p-values were below 0.05, as shown in italics.

Table 4: Two sample T test & one factor ANOVA values

	Gender	Age	Relationship status	Education	Monthly Income	Designation
Salary	.036	.116	.065	.000	.030	.000
Relation with supervisor	.589	.221	.180	.164	.180	.047
Interpersonal rel.	.113	.068	.467	.419	.249	.195
Teamwork	.007	.006	.440	.063	.438	.007
Work Environment	.004	.000	.928	.176	.444	.002
Welfare	.186	.627	.072	.113	.072	.004
Promotion	.011	.054	.047	.991	.004	.186
Performance Appraisal	.703	.015	.004	.243	.000	.000
Training& Development	.252	.101	.025	.017	.240	.045
Opportunity for Growth	.221	.099	.000	.027	.000	.000

Job Autonomy	.268	.022	.003	.257	.000	.001
Recognition	.901	.220	.271	.486	.042	.010
Participation	.760	.831	.520	.847	.407	.054
Grievance Handling	.350	.002	.460	.356	.192	.012
Equality	.000	.000	.001	.248	.005	.000

Table 4 presents results of two sample T test and one factor ANOVA test presenting the considerable variation in the level of motivation across various demographic groups. The results showed that standard value of salary and promotion is distinct for employees having varying monthly salary. The standard value for promotion is varied for employees with different level of education. The average score for salary, supervision, teamwork, work environment, welfare is varied for employees having different levels of designation. The results showed that the standard value of performance appraisal, job autonomy, grievance handling, and equality is varied across employees with diverse age groups. The average value of performance, appraisal opportunity for growth, job autonomy and equality is distinct for employees with varied level of education. The average score of performance appraisal, opportunity for growth, job autonomy, and equality vary for employees with varied monthly salary. The average core of performance appraisal, T&D, opportunity for growth, job autonomy, recognition, grievance handling and equality is different for employees working at different designation level.

Conclusion

With respect to first research question, the one sample t-test established that each and every motivational factor taken in the study leads to motivation of the workforce in consulting firms in India. The hypothesis was accepted since the average score of high salary is more than the average value of the other motivational factors. The other significant motivational factor after good salary is interpersonal relations followed by performance appraisal and team work. For the second research question, it has been revealed that demographic attributes of sex, qualification, income per month, relationship status, age, designation have influence on the motivation level of employees'. Men tend to be motivated by salary and promotion in comparison to women. Females are likely to be stimulated by good teamwork, good work environment and equality. The intrinsic factors and higher level needs, together with performance appraisal, training & development, opportunity for growth, job autonomy are much more appreciated by workforce having professional degree than by ones who are less qualified. Professionals want to have opportunities for career progression, right training to enhance their skills and knowledge. Top level management have assigned more importance to salary and work environment than mid and operational level employees. Senior leaders want to focus on having conducive environment for higher performance. Respondents in the age group below 25 years are more likely to

be motivated by teamwork, work environment, performance appraisal, job autonomy, equality as compared to employees in other age groups. Younger employees have more preference for team work, collaboration, personal development, growth in career and more freedom on the job. Employees with higher monthly income band have shown more preference to salary, performance appraisal, opportunity for growth, job autonomy, and recognition as compared to employees with lower income band. The reason being, immediate financial stability and security preferred by lower income group employees (Yang, 2011).

Limitations and Future scope of the study

This study consists of several limitations which could be explored in the research done in the future. One of the limitations is that the study has been done with respect to only one country; hence there is a need to investigate if the results could be observed in other countries as well (Lazauskaite-Zabielske et al., 2015). Moreover the results are limited to consulting sector in India, applying these results to other sector might lead to misleading interpretations (Al Araithi, 2002). Future research can broaden the scope by covering sectors like manufacturing, cross country, cross sector analysis and also by including different theories, factors motivating employees and methodologies (Al-Aufi & Al-Kalbani, 2014).

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