



INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

(Peer-reviewed, Refereed, Indexed & Open Access Journal)

DOI : 03.2021-11278686

ISSN : 2582-8568

IMPACT FACTOR : 8.428 (SJIF 2026)

Motivational Factors and Staff Performance: Empirical Evidence from the Manufacturing Sector

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DOI No. **03.2021-11278686** DOI Link :: <https://doi-ds.org/doilink/06.2026-29171778/IRJHIS2606023>

ABSTRACT:

Purpose: This study investigates the motivational factors that influence staff performance in the manufacturing sector, with empirical reference to Bajaj Electricals Ltd., a leading Indian manufacturing organisation. The research addresses a critical gap in understanding how both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational forces shape employee productivity and organisational effectiveness within an industrial context.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A descriptive, quantitative research design was adopted. Primary data were collected via a structured, self-administered questionnaire distributed to a random sample of 66 employees across diverse age cohorts, experience levels, and functional roles. Secondary data were drawn from peer-reviewed journals, research reports, and academic literature. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to examine response distributions across motivational constructs including salary, increment, working conditions, flexible timing, promotion, appreciation, advancement opportunity, recognition, decision-making authority, management style, career growth, and job security.

Findings: Results demonstrate that appreciation for work performed (92.4% agreement), promotion based on merit (93.9%), and salary increments (97.0%) are the three strongest motivational drivers. A strong majority (90.9%) of respondents confirmed that incentives and benefits strongly influence their performance. Approximately 50% of employees indicated that a combination of financial and non-financial incentives is most motivating. Notably, working conditions and the absence of flexible working hours emerged as significant sources of demotivation.

Practical Implications: Manufacturing organisations should adopt a holistic motivational strategy that integrates competitive financial rewards with non-monetary recognition, career development pathways, improved working conditions, and participatory management. HR practitioners should tailor motivational interventions to specific employee profiles as motivation is not uniform across the workforce.

Originality/Value: This paper contributes to the motivation-performance literature in developing economies, specifically within the Indian manufacturing context, an underexplored domain relative to service-sector studies. The study offers actionable insights for HR managers and organisational leaders seeking to build a sustainably motivated workforce.

Keywords: Employee Motivation, Staff Performance, Manufacturing Industry, Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, Incentives, Bajaj Electricals

1. INTRODUCTION:

The manufacturing sector represents the backbone of industrial economies, yet it remains one of the most challenging environments for sustaining high levels of employee motivation. Unlike knowledge workers in service sectors, manufacturing employees frequently encounter repetitive task structures, physical work demands, and hierarchical organisational systems that can progressively erode intrinsic motivation. The capacity of an organisation to maintain a motivated workforce is directly linked to productivity, quality output, cost efficiency, and competitive advantage (Shahzadi et al., 2014).

Motivation, broadly defined, refers to the forces that influence an individual's direction, intensity, and persistence of voluntary conduct (McShane & Von Glinow, 2018). In organisational contexts, it encompasses the psychological processes that channel behaviour toward goal-directed activities. Decades of management research — anchored in seminal frameworks including Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's (1959) Two-Factor Theory, McClelland's (1961) Learned Needs Theory, and Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory — consistently affirm that motivated employees deliver superior performance outcomes.

Despite this extensive theoretical grounding, empirical investigations in the context of Indian manufacturing industries remain relatively scarce. Most motivation-performance research has been conducted in Western organisational settings or within service industries, leaving a notable empirical gap regarding how specific motivational factors operate within the socio-cultural and economic realities of Indian manufacturing firms (Olusadum & Anulika, 2018; Manzoor, 2019).

This study addresses that gap through a systematic empirical investigation of motivational factors and their relationship to staff performance at Bajaj Electricals Ltd., a prominent player in India's manufacturing landscape. The research examines both extrinsic factors (salary, incentives, working conditions, flexible timing, promotion, job security) and intrinsic factors (appreciation, recognition, advancement opportunity, decision-making authority, career growth) to present a comprehensive picture of what motivates manufacturing employees in India.

1.1 Statement of the Problem:

A persistent challenge for manufacturing organisations is aligning employee motivation with organisational performance objectives. Demotivated employees exhibit reduced productivity, higher absenteeism, elevated turnover intentions, and resistance to organisational change — all of which impose significant costs. While management literature broadly acknowledges the motivation-performance nexus, the specific motivational profile of workers in Indian manufacturing contexts has not been systematically documented. This study aims to identify the relative salience of specific motivational factors and to examine their demonstrated impact on employee performance within a real manufacturing firm.

1.2 Research Objectives:

- To examine the range of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors operating in a manufacturing workforce.
- To identify which motivational factors have the most significant positive effect on employee performance.
- To assess the overall relationship between motivation and staff performance in the manufacturing industry.
- To derive evidence-based recommendations for HR practitioners in manufacturing organisations.

1.3 Significance of the Study:

This research makes several contributions. First, it advances empirical knowledge on employee motivation in Indian manufacturing firms, contributing to a literature dominated by Western samples and service-sector contexts. Second, by deploying multiple established theoretical frameworks simultaneously, it enables a multi-lens analysis of motivation rather than privileging any single theoretical perspective. Third, its findings offer directly actionable insights for HR managers seeking to design effective motivational interventions for manufacturing employees.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Motivation:

2.1.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

Abraham Maslow (1943) proposed a hierarchical model of human motivation organised across five ascending levels: physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualisation. In organisational settings, this model implies that managers must ensure basic compensation and job security before expecting employees to be motivated by higher-order needs such as recognition and growth opportunities. Maslow's framework remains foundational to HR practice, particularly in manufacturing organisations where physiological and safety-level concerns (wages, workplace safety) are primary.

2.1.2 Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory:

Herzberg (1959) distinguished between hygiene factors — whose absence produces dissatisfaction but whose presence does not actively motivate — and motivator factors, which generate genuine satisfaction and drive higher performance. Hygiene factors include pay, company policy, working conditions, and job security; motivators include achievement, recognition, responsibility, and growth. This distinction has profound practical implications: organisations that invest exclusively in compensation improvements without addressing motivator factors will suppress dissatisfaction without generating genuine engagement.

2.1.3 McClelland's Learned Needs Theory:

McClelland (1961) identified three learned needs that vary in strength across individuals: Need for Achievement (nAch), Need for Affiliation (nAff), and Need for Power (nPow). High-nAch individuals thrive on moderately challenging tasks with clear feedback; high-nAff individuals seek harmonious workplace relationships; high-nPow individuals are motivated by influence and leadership. Manufacturing managers can leverage this framework to assign roles and design reward systems that align with the dominant need profiles of their employees.

2.1.4 Vroom's Expectancy Theory:

Vroom (1964) proposed that motivation is a multiplicative function of three perceptions: Expectancy (belief that effort leads to performance), Instrumentality (belief that performance leads to reward), and Valence (value the individual places on the reward). This model has significant practical utility: if employees do not perceive a clear link between their efforts and rewards, motivation will be attenuated regardless of the reward's objective value. Transparent performance management systems are thus essential motivational infrastructure.

2.1.5 Equity Theory:

Adams (1965) proposed that employees compare their input-to-outcome ratios against those of referent others, and adjust their effort levels based on the perceived fairness of this comparison. Perceptions of inequity — whether underpayment or overpayment — generate motivational tension that employees resolve through behavioural or cognitive adjustments. In manufacturing contexts, pay transparency and equitable performance-based rewards are critical to sustaining motivation.

2.2 Empirical Studies on Motivation and Performance:

Shahzadi et al. (2014) examined motivational factors among Pakistani employees and found that intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and extrinsic rewards each independently contributed to performance outcomes. Their study emphasised that financial incentives alone are insufficient; employees also require psychological empowerment and developmental opportunities.

Olusadum and Anulika (2018) studied Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education (Nigeria) and found that motivational strategies positively affected performance, though the study did not fully explain why certain employees remained dissatisfied despite the presence of motivational programmes. This points to the need for disaggregated analysis by employee subgroups.

Muogbo (2013) investigated Nigerian manufacturing firms and found that both financial and non-financial incentives significantly influenced organisational performance. Critically, he found that inadequate reward systems were a primary driver of interpersonal conflicts and performance deterioration.

Manzoor (2019) demonstrated that transformational leadership, mediated by corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, positively influenced employee performance in SMEs. This finding highlights the role of leadership style and organisational values as motivational instruments beyond

traditional incentive structures.

Rozman, Treven, and Cancer (2017) found differential motivational drivers across employee age groups, with younger employees placing higher value on career development opportunities and older employees prioritising job security and work-life balance. This age-differentiated perspective has direct relevance for manufacturing workforces, which typically span wide age ranges.

Taken together, the literature affirms that motivation is a multidimensional construct whose components exert differential effects on performance depending on industry, cultural context, and individual employee characteristics. No single motivational factor dominates universally, and effective HR strategy must account for this complexity.

2.3 Research Gap:

While the general relationship between motivation and performance is well-established, few empirical studies focus specifically on Indian manufacturing firms. The Indian manufacturing context is characterised by unique institutional features: a large and relatively young workforce, significant wage disparities, limited formalisation of performance appraisal systems in many firms, and cultural values that influence the salience of specific motivational factors (e.g., job security, hierarchical recognition). This study addresses this gap directly.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

3.1 Research Design:

This study employs a descriptive, cross-sectional quantitative research design. A structured survey instrument was used to capture employee perceptions of motivational factors and their self-reported relationship to performance outcomes. Descriptive statistics (frequency distributions and percentage analysis) were applied to analyse and interpret the collected data. This design is appropriate for establishing the prevalence and relative importance of motivational factors within the study population.

3.2 Study Population and Sampling:

The target population comprised the employees of Bajaj Electricals Ltd., a prominent Indian manufacturer of electrical equipment and consumer products, headquartered in Mumbai, India. A random sampling approach was adopted to ensure representativeness across organisational levels and demographic categories. The final sample consisted of 66 respondents. This sample size is consistent with comparable studies in the HR motivation literature (Chaudhary & Sharma, 2012; Manzoor, 2014) and is sufficient for descriptive frequency analysis.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument:

A structured, self-administered questionnaire was designed and pilot-tested prior to full deployment. The instrument comprised two sections:

- Section A: Demographic and background information (age, gender, work experience).

- Section B: Eighteen items assessing employee perceptions of specific motivational factors and their impact on performance, using a five-point Likert scale (Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 5). Motivational constructs assessed included: salary, salary increment, working conditions, flexible timing, promotion, appreciation, advancement opportunity, recognition, decision-making authority, management style, career growth opportunity, job security, satisfaction with HR support, type of incentive preferences, satisfaction with organisational incentives, and perceived influence of incentives on performance.

3.4 Data Analysis:

Data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. Response frequencies and percentages were computed for each motivational item. Findings are presented in tabular and narrative form. While this study does not employ inferential statistical testing, the descriptive patterns observed are interpreted in light of the theoretical frameworks reviewed in Section 2.

3.5 Ethical Considerations:

Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. Respondents were informed of the study's academic purpose and assured of confidentiality. No personal identifying information was collected or reported.

4. FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS:

4.1 Respondent Profile:

The demographic profile of the 66 respondents is presented in Table 1.

Category	Sub-group	Percentage (%)
Age	18–22 years	9.1%
	22–25 years	22.7%
	25–30 years	18.2%
	More than 30 years	16.7%
Gender	Male	53.0%
	Female	47.0%
Work Experience	0–1 year	43.9%
	1–3 years	16.7%
	3–5 years	16.7%
	More than 5 years	22.7%

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n = 66)

The respondent pool is relatively young, with approximately 31.8% aged 25 years or below, consistent with the age composition of Bajaj Electricals' operational workforce. Gender parity is approximately maintained (53% male, 47% female). A significant proportion (43.9%) have less than one year of experience, suggesting a relatively mobile workforce for whom onboarding motivation is especially critical.

4.2 Motivational Factor Analysis:

Table 2 presents the percentage distribution of responses to each motivational factor item, consolidating Strongly Agree and Agree responses to derive the proportion of respondents who affirm each factor as motivationally significant.

Motivational Factor	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree+ (%)
Salary	48.5	37.9	12.1	1.5
Salary Increment	59.1	37.9	1.5	1.5
Working Conditions	51.5	40.9	7.6	0.0
Flexible Timing	37.9	47.0	13.6	1.5
Promotion (Merit-based)	60.6	33.3	4.5	1.5
Appreciation for Work	63.6	28.8	7.6	0.0
Opportunity for Advancement	50.0	43.9	6.1	0.0
Recognition	37.9	53.0	9.1	0.0
Decision-Making Authority	46.2	35.4	16.9	1.5
Management Style	40.9	40.9	16.7	1.5
Career Growth Opportunity	50.0	43.9	6.1	0.0
Job Security	57.6	34.8	7.6	0.0

Table 2: Motivational Factor Response Distributions (n = 66)

4.2.1 Extrinsic Motivational Factors:

Salary emerged as a strong motivational driver, with 86.4% of respondents either agreeing or strongly agreeing that compensation influences their performance. However, salary increment was affirmed by an even greater proportion (97.0%), suggesting that the prospect of future earnings growth is a more powerful motivational instrument than the current compensation level alone. This finding is consistent with Vroom's (1964) Expectancy Theory: employees are motivated not merely by present

rewards but by the instrumentality link between performance and future reward.

Promotion based on merit received strong affirmation (93.9%), underscoring that transparent, achievement-linked advancement processes are essential to sustaining motivation in manufacturing contexts. Job security was similarly important (92.4%), which is theoretically consistent with Maslow's Safety level: when employment stability is uncertain, higher-order motivational factors lose their salience.

Flexible working hours were affirmed by 84.9% of respondents as a motivational factor, yet the case study findings reveal that Bajaj Electricals does not currently offer flexible timing arrangements. This represents a significant motivational gap — employees value flexibility, but the organisation is not providing it, thereby suppressing motivational potential.

4.2.2 Intrinsic and Relational Motivational Factors:

Appreciation for work performed recorded the highest level of strong agreement (63.6%) of all items assessed, with a combined agreement rate of 92.4%. This finding has significant theoretical relevance: appreciation is a classic Herzberg motivator — it generates positive satisfaction rather than merely preventing dissatisfaction — and its relative dominance in this manufacturing sample challenges the common assumption that manufacturing workers are primarily extrinsically motivated. Recognition (90.9% agreement) and career growth opportunity (93.9%) further reinforce the importance of non-financial motivational mechanisms. The near-universal affirmation of career growth as a motivational factor is particularly noteworthy, as it indicates that manufacturing employees do not view their careers as static — they aspire to advancement and expect their employers to provide that pathway.

Decision-making authority (81.6% agreement) and management style (81.8% agreement) received slightly lower combined agreement, with relatively elevated neutral response rates (16.9% and 16.7% respectively). This suggests greater heterogeneity in employee preferences for participatory management — some employees actively value autonomy, while others may prefer directive or supportive leadership styles.

4.3 Incentive Preferences and Performance Impact:

When asked about their preferred incentive type, 48.5% of respondents indicated financial incentives as their primary motivator, while an equal proportion (50%) preferred a combination of financial and non-financial incentives. No respondent identified non-financial incentives exclusively as most motivating. This finding reinforces the theoretical proposition that while financial rewards are necessary, they are insufficient on their own: the most motivated employees are those whose organisations invest in a balanced portfolio of incentive mechanisms.

Satisfaction with the organisation's current incentive structure was reported by 75.7% of respondents (24.2% highly satisfied + 51.5% satisfied), while 19.7% remained neutral and a small

minority expressed dissatisfaction. This indicates a generally positive incentive environment but also highlights room for improvement.

Critically, 90.9% of respondents affirmed that incentives and related benefits strongly influence their performance, with only 9.1% indicating otherwise. This near-universal recognition of incentive influence provides strong empirical support for the core motivation-performance proposition.

4.4 HR Department Satisfaction:

Overall satisfaction with HR department support was high: 27.7% of respondents were highly satisfied and 69.2% were satisfied, yielding a combined satisfaction rate of 96.9%. This positive HR perception likely contributes to an enabling motivational climate within the organisation, as employees who feel supported by HR are better positioned to leverage available motivational resources.

5. DISCUSSION:

The findings of this study align with and extend the existing literature on employee motivation in manufacturing contexts. Several theoretical and practical insights merit detailed discussion.

5.1 The Primacy of Recognition and Appreciation:

The finding that appreciation for work performed is the single most strongly affirmed motivational factor (SA: 63.6%) confirms Herzberg's (1959) proposition that recognition is a true motivator rather than a hygiene factor. This has a critical practical implication: managers in manufacturing settings often focus disproportionately on compensation and safety issues (hygiene factors) while neglecting systematic recognition programmes. The data suggest that relatively low-cost interventions — structured acknowledgement of employee contributions — may yield substantial motivational returns.

5.2 The Complementarity of Financial and Non-Financial Incentives:

The near-equal split between employees who prefer financial incentives alone (48.5%) and those who prefer a combination (50%) suggests that no single incentive modality dominates. This finding is consistent with McClelland's (1961) theory, which posits that individual motivational drivers vary substantially: high-nAch employees may respond more strongly to performance-linked bonuses, while high-nAff employees may place greater value on team recognition and workplace relationships. HR strategy should therefore avoid uniform incentive models and instead seek to personalise motivational frameworks.

5.3 Working Conditions as a Critical Gap:

The data reveal a notable tension between what employees value and what the organisation provides. While 92.4% of respondents affirmed working conditions as a motivational factor and 84.9% valued flexible timing, the qualitative findings indicate that employees are not happy with working conditions, and the organisation does not offer flexible work arrangements. This represents a textbook hygiene factor deficit: as Herzberg (1959) predicted, inadequate working conditions will generate

dissatisfaction that overrides the motivational gains from other positive factors. Addressing this structural gap should be a priority for Bajaj Electricals.

5.4 Career Development as a Strategic Imperative:

Career growth opportunity was affirmed by 93.9% of respondents, making it the joint highest-scoring motivational factor alongside salary increment. This challenges a common managerial assumption in manufacturing: that shop-floor and operational employees are primarily motivated by short-term financial rewards and are indifferent to career development. The data suggest the opposite — manufacturing employees actively aspire to career advancement and will be motivated by organisations that provide credible development pathways. This finding is consistent with Rozman et al. (2017), who found that career development was a critical motivational driver across employee age groups.

5.5 Implications for Vroom's Expectancy Model:

Vroom's (1964) expectancy framework requires that employees perceive clear links between effort, performance, and reward. The high affirmation of merit-based promotion (93.9%) and the general satisfaction with salary (86.4%) suggests that the expectancy and valence components of Vroom's model are adequately met in this organisation. However, the dissatisfaction with working conditions and the absence of flexible timing may attenuate the instrumentality component: employees who are physically or psychologically taxed by poor working conditions may not believe that their effort reliably translates into the performance outcomes required to earn rewards.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This study has systematically examined the motivational factors influencing staff performance in an Indian manufacturing organisation. The findings affirm that motivation in manufacturing contexts is a multidimensional construct, shaped by both extrinsic factors (compensation, promotion, job security) and intrinsic factors (appreciation, recognition, career development). The near-universal (90.9%) recognition that incentives and benefits influence performance confirms the centrality of motivational management to organisational productivity.

The most important practical finding is that appreciation for work performed, merit-based promotion, and salary increment are the three dominant motivational drivers in this population — and that working conditions and flexible timing represent significant motivational deficits that the organisation must address.

6.1 Recommendations:

- Formalise recognition programmes: Implement structured, organisation-wide employee appreciation mechanisms — including peer recognition, manager commendation systems, and performance-milestone awards — to systematically leverage the motivational power of appreciation.

- Review working conditions: Conduct a comprehensive audit of physical work environments and invest in ergonomic improvements, workplace safety enhancements, and environmental quality upgrades. Unhealthy or uncomfortable working conditions undermine all other motivational investments.
- Introduce flexible work policies: Explore the feasibility of flexible scheduling arrangements (e.g., shift flexibility, compressed work weeks) to address the unmet employee expectation for work-life balance.
- Strengthen career development infrastructure: Create transparent, multi-tier career pathways for operational employees, supported by internal training programmes, mentorship schemes, and succession planning. Communicate these pathways clearly to all employees.
- Differentiate incentive strategies by employee profile: Design incentive portfolios that combine financial rewards with non-monetary recognition, tailored to the motivational profiles of different employee segments (age, tenure, role level).
- Sustain HR support quality: The high satisfaction with HR support (96.9%) is a valuable organisational asset. HR departments should maintain service quality and expand advisory roles in motivational programme design and implementation.

6.2 Limitations and Future Research:

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample is drawn from a single organisation, limiting the generalisability of findings. Future research should employ multi-organisational, multi-sector designs to establish broader external validity. Second, the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference — future studies employing longitudinal designs would be better positioned to establish causal relationships between motivational interventions and performance outcomes. Third, this study relies on self-reported performance perceptions rather than objective performance metrics; future research should triangulate self-report data with organisational performance records. Finally, the deployment of inferential statistical methods (e.g., regression analysis, structural equation modelling) in future studies would enable a more nuanced quantification of the relative predictive power of individual motivational factors.

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