

Employee Motivation and its Most Influential Factors: A study on the Telecommunication Industry in Bangladesh

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People are playing an important role for effective operation in every organization. In the recent years organizations have realized this and become increasingly interested in managing employees which will enhance business performance. The purpose of this study is to examine the ranked importance of some motivational factors and to recognize how the Telecommunication sector of Bangladesh is performing in motivating its workforce. Telecom industry was chosen since significant issues were reported about employee unrest during 2012. The data was collected from 81 employees of different private telecommunication companies and was analyzed using mean values and frequency percentage tables. The result concludes that, payment is not the only factor for motivating employees; rather there are some other pivotal factors like- opportunities for growth and development, job security, interesting work are the key which have significant contribution in propelling employee motivation in the workplace. Carefully designed employee engagement programs and reward systems should be considered.

Field of Study: Human Resource Management

1. Introduction

Over the last 15 years, the telecommunication and mobile industry has grown rapidly and become one of the most important business markets in Bangladesh. Now the companies are passing through the age of global competition, where rapid change, fierce competition and diversity have become the norm. Now people are quickly becoming the most important asset and therefore, successful telecommunication companies generally recognize the crucial role of acquiring right workforce and retaining employees by motivating them if they hope to stay viable in telecommunication industry.

Moreover, the modern trend in human resource management highlights the importance of motivating employees and helping them develop in the respective skills and talents to get maximum output from these resources. Telecom companies were trying their best to fulfill employee needs and demands as well as used different techniques to motivate and develop their workforce.

In the recent times, it has been significantly reported at national media about the employee unrest situation faced by couple of telecommunication companies in Bangladesh.

Surely there were some lacking from the part of telecom service providers for which employees could not satisfy their demands, therefore grievance arises which in turn leads to employee unrest. This issue is the initial motivation behind this study. From this consideration, this study is generated to identify the most crucial motivational factors that can enhance employee performance. This exploration will be beneficial for the telecom and other sectors to develop and retain their right workforce.

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1.1 Scope and Objective of the Study

The study was conducted in the year 2013, and the survey period is from September to October 2013 to explore the factors that motivate employees most according to the ranked order of importance, as well as to identify how the telecommunication industry of Bangladesh is performing in motivating them. It is viewed that different research on assessing importance of motivational factors according to the ranked order of importance is not uncommon but this study tries to find out whether these ranked order may vary from other studies. Moreover, no other previous research found that in some cases employees fight for the right of joining in an employee union. Another purpose of this study was to find out some new forces than the past research since lots of advancement has been noticed during last decade. For this study, particularly employees of telecommunication industry of Bangladesh has been selected, and as a sample 81 employees has been taken from four telecommunication companies of Bangladesh, namely, Grameenphone Ltd., Robi Axiata Ltd, Banglalink and Airtel. The current paper starts with an introduction on the factors that have influential impact on employee motivation followed by literature review. Then the research methodology is discussed in detail. Results are presented and interpreted followed by discussion, findings, and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

Human resource is the sole strategic asset of every organization. In the age of globalization, if organizations are to sustain and grow their way out of the current economic depression, they have to utilize their human resources effectively. And these resources will retain and give their best when they are motivated by several organizational and other factors. Before identifying the factors that motivate the human resources, we must understand what motivation is.

2.1 The Meaning of Motivation

Motivation is the driving force that makes people willingly want to put in their best in what they do. Many contemporary authors have defined the concept of motivation. Baron (1983) describes motivation as, “an accumulation of different processes which influence and direct our behavior to achieve some specific goal”.

Pinder (2008) referred that, “Work motivation is a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual’s being, to initiate work related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity and duration.” According to L. Deckers (2010), Motivation is a person’s internal disposition to be concerned with and approach positive incentives and avoid negative incentives. To further this, an incentive is the anticipated reward or aversive event available in the environment.

2.2 Factors Affecting Employee Motivation in the Workplace

Why do we need motivated employees? The answer is survival (Smith, 1994). Motivated employees are needed in our rapidly changing workplaces. Motivated employees are needed for the survival of the organizations and it helps to increase productivity. Employee performance is directly related to motivational factors. To be effective, managers need to understand what motivates employees within the context of the roles they perform. Of all the functions a manager performs, motivating employees is arguably the most complex. This is due, in part, to the fact that what motivates employees changes constantly (Bowen & Radhakrishna, 1991).

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Organizations can motivate the workforce most through introducing appropriate reward and recognition programs and other benefits. Bishop (1987) suggested that, pay is directly related with productivity and reward system depends upon the size of an organization. Effective reward and recognition system can be a good motivator but inappropriate reward and recognition program increase de-motivation of the employees. Research undertaken by Kovach (1987) suggested that, as employees' income increases, money becomes less of a motivator. Also, as employees get older, interesting work becomes more of a motivator.

According to some previous researches, it is seen that factors that affect the employees of different organizations in a negative way are- insufficient wage and job security, limited training programs, lack of new opportunities etc. Moreover, with the pace of time several other factors have been revealed those are negatively affect employee motivation and performance. That's why there are different researches made by researchers to determine the factors that motivate the employees in a positive way and as a result of these researches too many factors have been found (Mak & Sockel, 2001; Velo & Mitta, 2006).

A study of industrial employees, conducted by Kovach (1987), yielded the following ranked order of motivational factors: (a) interesting work, (b) full appreciation of work done, and (c) feeling of being in on things. Another study of employees, conducted by Harpaz (1990), yielded the following ranked order of motivational factors: (a) interesting work, (b) good wages, and (c) job security.

Research conducted by Lindner (1998) by using a descriptive survey of twenty five (25) employees in research center, rank-ordered the motivational factors affecting employee performance as: (a) interesting work, (b) good wages, (c) full appreciation of work done, (d) job security, (e) good working conditions, (f) promotions and growth in the organization, (g) feeling of being in on things, (h) personal loyalty to employees, (i) tactful discipline, and (j) sympathetic help with personal problems.

When comes to 2000s years, factors that motivate employees are seen to be changed as there are technological developments, rapid increase of competitive factors among businesses and changes in employee needs as well as noticeable increase of female counterparts into the workforce are seen to be effective. For example, in the research of Ölçer (2005) to determine what are the ranked factors that affect working staff motivations are job security, good relations with superiors, wage and appreciation based on fair performance, trustful and cooperative relations with workmates, appropriate working environment, ensuring opportunities for social development, doing group work, giving important and appropriate works in accordance with employee's skills and work rotation. Ölçer stressed that there is a meaningful relation in a positive way between motivation level and performance level.

A study on fast food industry conducted by Hossain and Hossain (2011) found several different factors according to the order of importance- Good wages, overall job security, training and development, benefits, evaluating performance fairly, accepts mistakes positively, availability of logistics supports, opportunities for career growth and development, flexible working hour, recognition, challenging work, reasonableness in work.

Surprising fact is no other previous researches on employee motivation have not focused on work-life balance, facility of joining in a union as important motivational factors. These factors could have great impact on employee motivation.

2.3 Theories of Motivation

Understanding what motivated employees and how they were motivated was the focus of many researchers. Five major approaches that have led to our understanding of motivation are Maslow's need-hierarchy theory, Herzberg's two-factor theory, Vroom's expectancy theory, Adams' equity theory, and Skinner's reinforcement theory.

According to Maslow, employees have five levels of needs (Maslow, 1943): physiological, safety, social, ego, and self-actualizing. Maslow argued that lower level needs had to be satisfied before the next higher level need would motivate employees.

Herzberg's work categorized motivation into two factors: motivators and hygienes (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Motivator or intrinsic factors, such as achievement and recognition, produce job satisfaction. Hygiene or extrinsic factors, such as pay and job security, produce job dissatisfaction.

Vroom's theory is based on the belief that employee effort will lead to performance and performance will lead to rewards (Vroom, 1964). Rewards may be either positive or negative. The more positive the reward the more likely the employee will be highly motivated. Conversely, the more negative the reward the less likely the employee will be motivated.

Adams' theory states that employees strive for equity between themselves and other workers. Equity is achieved when the ratio of employee outcomes over inputs is equal to other employee outcomes over inputs (Adams, 1965).

Skinner's theory simply states those employees' behaviors that lead to positive outcomes will be repeated and behaviors that lead to negative outcomes will not be repeated (Skinner, 1953). Managers should positively reinforce employee behaviors that lead to positive outcomes. Managers should negatively reinforce employee behavior that leads to negative outcomes.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Research Design

As this study tries to recognize the motivational factors according to the ranked order of importance, the employees (from different genders, age groups, marital status, education backgrounds, designations) from the four selected Telecommunication companies of Bangladesh have been taken as population. The survey was conducted on September to October 2013 using convenience method of sampling and 81 questionnaires were distributed among the employees. Self designed questionnaire was designed and face to face interview method was used for data collection.

3.2 Questionnaire Design

A structured questionnaire was designed to determine employee perception about reward practice and to identify factors those are more motivational to them according to the ranked order of importance. To make the questionnaire understandable, it was divided into three parts. The first part of the questionnaire contained questions regarding employee profile. The second part contained 08 item statements regarding variables that motivate employee performance. These variables are included in the questionnaire based on

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literature review. And the third segment was about current reward and recognition system pursuing by the telecom industry. A five point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used to measure responses of both second and third segment of the questionnaire.

3.3 Framework of the Factors

As per the previous researches conducted on employee motivation various factors which donate the employee motivation are taken into consideration. These factors are represented in table 1 along with their sources:

Table 1: Motivational factors and their sources from literature review

Study Variables	Source
Salary and other financial incentives	Herrzberg et al. (1959), Linder (1998), Ölçer (2005), Hossain & Hossain (2011)
Opportunities for career growth and development	Herrzberg et al. (1959), Linder (1998), Hossain & Hossain (2011)
Feeling of team spirit and cooperation among coworkers and supervisors	Herrzberg et al. (1959), Linder (1998), Ölçer (2005)
Feeling that their work is valued and appreciated/ Formal recognition	Herrzberg et al. (1959), Linder (1998), Hossain & Hossain (2011)
Challenging and interesting work	Herrzberg et al. (1959), Linder (1998), Hossain & Hossain (2011)
Job security	Herrzberg et al. (1959), Linder (1998), Ölçer (2005), Hossain & Hossain (2011)
Good working environment	Herrzberg et al. (1959), Linder (1998), Ölçer (2005)
Flexible working hour	Hossain & Hossain (2011)

3.4 Statistical Tools for Data Analysis

Primary data collected from field survey was tabulated using Microsoft Office Excel, and all data was recorded using numerical codes. Various statistical measures such as frequency distribution, percentage table, mean and standard deviation were used in describing the variables.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

People from different background may think of different factors that motivate and thereby enhance their performance. So, this paper has considered a few important demographic factors. Among those- gender, age, years of experience and salary are considered. Respondents' ages lie within 25 to 45 years. Average age is 31.21 years. The demographic characteristics also show a gender division of the respondents, the male is dominant (i.e. 74%) over female. 33.33% of the employees earned between Tk. 55000 - Tk. 100000. Length of service of most of the respondents (40.74%) is between 3-6 years.

4.1 Factors Affecting Motivation of Employees According to the Ranked Order of Importance

To identify the factors those motivate employees in the workplace, 08 attributes have been selected which are shown in the Table 2. The importance of various attributes has been

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ranked by measuring mean and standard deviation. The highest mean value is found for the variable "opportunities for career growth and development" and the lowest mean value are found for the variable "flex-time". The analysis of the factors is discussed below and the means and the standard deviations of these variables are depicted in Table 2.

4.1.1 Opportunities for Career growth and Development

In this study, "development and growth" is identified as the most important factor for motivating employees of the telecommunication industry compared to other factors. It is supported by maximum number of the respondents (i.e. 79.01%). But it is not ranked as the one of the most important factor by Linder (1998) and Hossain and Hossain (2011). This factor was ranked 6th in the study of Linder (1998) and 2nd by the study of Hossain and Hossain (2011). To address this factor, managers must have to focus on propelling the development and ability of the employees through training programs, enhance growth opportunities and focus on performance based promotion. A comparison of this factor to Maslow's need-hierarchy theory provides some interesting insight into employee motivation. This factor is considered as the powerful motivational factor for employees to satisfy their need for esteem and self actualization. It is also known as the intrinsic factor, which makes employees satisfied and highly motivated when it is met. It is a motivator according to Herzberg's two-factor theory. Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman (1959) stated that to the degree that motivators are present in a job, motivation will occur.

4.1.2 Job Security

In this study, "Job security" is identified as the second important factor that enhances employee motivation in the telecom industry. If we compare this factor with other related research, we see that it is ranked 3rd and 4th consecutively according to the study conducted by Harpaz (1990) and Linder (1998), and ranked 2nd according to Hossain and Hossain (2011). Job security is one of the major concerns of employees in this sector now a days since huge retrenchment has been seen recently. It is a safety factor, according to Maslow. In the age of downsizing, employees are always in a fear about their job security. Any minor changes in the working environment would make them worried about their security. Organizations have to ensure proper communication if any crucial change occurs in the organization. On the other hand, job security is a hygiene factor according to Herzberg. If there is lack of job security, job dissatisfaction will occur. But if it is present in the workplace it will prevent job dissatisfaction but do not lead to satisfaction.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the employee motivational attributes/factors

Motivational Factors	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranking
Salary and other financial incentives	81	2	5	4.4198	0.92011	6
Opportunities for career growth and development	81	2	5	4.6420	0.76336	1
Feeling of team spirit and cooperation among coworkers and supervisor	81	3	5	4.5802	0.67047	4
Work is valued and appreciated/ Formal recognition	81	2	5	4.5309	0.79193	5
Flex-time	81	1	5	3.9506	1.08283	8
Challenging and interesting task	81	2	5	4.5926	0.84820	3
Job security	81	3	5	4.6296	0.6009	2
Good working environment	81	3	5	4.2593	0.7870	7

Source: Author

4.1.3 Challenging and Interesting Task

Challenging and interesting work ranked as the most important factor for enhancing employee motivation by Kovach (1987), Harpaz (1990) and Linder (1998). But this study revealed challenging task as the 3rd important factor according to the respondents (mean value 4.5926). Tyilana (2005) suggests that three motivational factors such as achievement, recognition and work itself caused 88% job satisfaction. If companies wish to enhance their employees' need for self actualization, they must have to provide interesting and challenging work that will propel employee innovation, creativity, sense of accomplishment and increased responsibility. According to Herzberg (1959), this factor is a motivator. Assuring presence in the workplace will enhance high motivation and satisfaction.

4.1.4 Feeling of Team Spirit and Cooperation

Obviously a healthy workplace where employees have cooperative and harmonious relationship with their coworkers and supervisors will lead to higher performance. If they have team spirit it will lead them toward synergistic solution. It is also appreciated by the respondents of the current study (ranked 4th according to the mean value 4.5802). This factor also ranked 4th according to the study conducted by Ölçer (2005). It is a social factor according to Maslow (1943). Introducing congenial social environment is quite convincing issue which causes employee motivation and work satisfaction. Employee's bad feeling toward their authority and coworkers have impact on their job performance which leads to dissatisfaction. There is a variety of ways to develop the relationship such as, through task (giving feedback, taking ideas from employees/team mates, giving consultation etc.) and non-task (showing respect, care for each other etc.).

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4.1.5 Work is Valued and Appreciated/Formal Recognition

Appreciation is one of the most top desires of employees which motivate and keep them productive by enhancing their morale. This allows them to enhance positive self evaluation and ability to contribute for organization. According to the mean value of the responses, this factor has been ranked 5th which contradicts some of the previous studies. It is ranked 3rd and 4th consecutively according to Linder (1998) and Hossain & Hossain (2011). It is an esteem factor according to Maslow (1943). Herzberg's two factor theory (1959) described it as motivator that makes employees more satisfied.

Another comparison with of this factor with Adams's equity theory shows, if an employee feels that there is a lack of appreciation for work done, as being too low relative to another employee, an inequity may exist and the employee will be de-motivated. Adams (1965) stated employees will attempt to restore equity through various means, some of which may be counter-productive to organizational goals and objectives.

There are several ways of recognition including greeting for better jobs, acknowledge employee milestones by giving formal award, high appreciation (either oral) for coming up with new and innovative ideas, arranging frequent team building activities etc. However, there should be equal recognition for all and managers should appreciate immediately after employees deserve it.

4.1.6 Salary and Other Financial Incentives

Money is considered to be a panacea used to have solved to the most problems. Therefore, money should be the most crucial factor for motivating employees. But surprising fact is, this study contradicts with this statement. Pay and other incentives, has been spotted as least important motivational factor (ranked 6th) in this study. It was ranked 2nd by Linder (1998) and 1st by the study of Hossain & Hossain (2011). It is, however, not a most powerful factor like others that do have higher effect on employee motivation. This result substantiate Herzberg's two factor theory which states that salary and benefits are the hygiene factor which can prevent employee's dissatisfaction only but do not necessarily motivate them.

However, good incentives should be provided with the aim of attracting and retaining qualified people and organizations should not rely solely on salary, bonus and other monetary and non-monetary incentives to motivate the diverse workforce.

4.1.7 Good Working Environment

Good working environment is another crucial factor that affects the level of motivation of employee significantly. This study found the factor as 7th important motivational factor (mean value 4.2593) which contradicts the research findings of Hossain & Hossain (2011) and Linder (1998) (ranked 1st and 5th respectively). If organizations become unable to provide better working environment high dissatisfaction will arise from the part of employees (Herzberg 1959). But ensuring better working condition may not be a high satisfier.

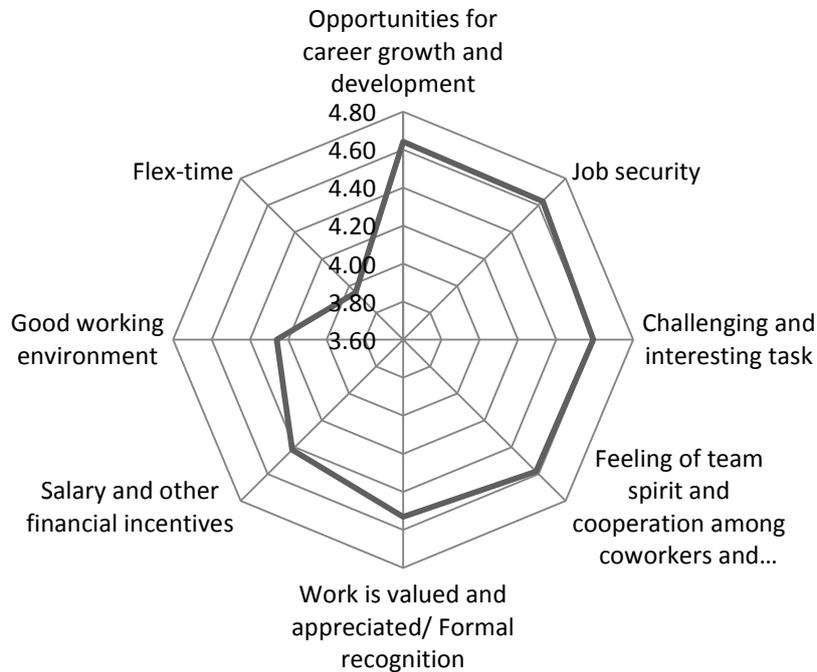
4.1.8 Flex-Time

To 32.1% of the employees, flex-time has a good motivational impact on their respective performance. So according to this study, this factor is considered as the least important

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motivational tool. This factor, however ranked 3rd by the study of Hossain & Hossain (2011). Ensuring flexible working hour might enhance employees' work-life balance which is extremely important for both male and female employees of telecom industry.

Graph 1: Employee motivational factors



4.2 The Overall Satisfaction Level of the Employees: Analysis Based on Demographic Factors

This study reveals that motivational factors may be viewed differently by the male and female counterparts working in the telecom industry of Bangladesh. Male employees ranked “challenging tasks” (4.8167) as the most important motivational factor. On the contrary, mean value (3.9523) shows, to female employees this factor ranked 7th. They generally aspire for less challenging jobs as they are more concerned about work family conflict than men. There is evidence that they are generally less confident about their abilities than men (Niederle & Yestrumskas, 2008). Moreover, according to the mean value (4.7619), “feeling of team spirit and cooperation” is the most important motivational factor to the female employees of the telecom sector. Whereas, this factor scored 5th by the male employees (4.5167). Which shows women are more likely to conform to and work in with their teams rather doing individual tasks than men. By gender comparison, male employees are more motivated compared to female counterparts.

Study reveals that employees ranging between age group 35-39 are highly satisfied and age group 40-45 is concerned about intrinsic rewards (mean value 5). As the age of the employees is increasing they tend to prefer intrinsic rewards. Since they prefer intrinsic rewards, they also support “challenging work” as one of the most important factors for motivation (mean value 5). As the age of the workforce increases, salary becomes the least important factor toward them. It has also been proved by the study result of Kovach (1987). Maximum employees of the current study supported “Job security” as another important variable. Mean values are consistent regardless of the age variation. The reason behind this can be employees of the telecom industry were highly concerned about their job security as their coworkers were sacked from their respective company. Mean value is

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consistently increasing for the factor “career growth and development”, as the age of the population increases. (Table 5).

5. Conclusion

The study attempted to identify ranked key factors that affect the motivation of employees working at telecom industry and assess their motivation level. Assessment of the data explores several factors and the highest ranked factor is opportunities for career growth and the least important factor is flex-time. The comparison of this study with other researchers found some discrepancies. The research findings supports the idea that what motivates employees differs given the context in which the employee works. So managers have to consider the industry as well as culture in which they are operating. What is clear, however, is that although employees ranked advancement and growth as the most important motivational factor, they are also highly concerned about job security, which is not supported by the previous studies. It is because employees of the telecom industry are highly concerned about the current retrenchments in their industry.

So it is suggested that facilitating employees by joining in a union may reduce the fear of losing the job and enhance several rights of the employees. It is also clear that this study contradicts to what Maslow's theory suggests as the ranges of motivational factors are mixed in this study. Maslow's conclusions that lower level motivational factors must be met before ascending to the next level were not confirmed by this study. This paper will help managers to understand what motivates employees most and things they should do to create a motivated workforce.

There are certain limitations of the study which can be taken into account for further studies in the future, like sample size was too small and only telecommunication sector was considered. Motivation is a very broad term, and the research is quite extensive if one has to go deeper into the subject. There is a wide range of theories on what motivates people (content theories) as well as theories that try to describe how behavior is initiated, directed and sustained (process theories). However, this paper basically restricted to the content theories, which identify the specific needs and are responsible for creating and directing the human behavior.

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Appendix

Table 3: Personal profile of the respondents (N=81)

Profile	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Gender				
Male	60	74.07	74.07	74.07
Female	21	25.93	25.93	100.0
Age				
25-29 Years	34	41.98	41.98	41.98
30-34 Years	35	43.21	43.21	85.19
35-39 Years	8	9.87	9.87	95.06
40-45 Years	4	4.94	4.94	100.0
Years of Experience				
0-3 Years	11	13.58	13.58	13.58
3-6 Years	33	40.74	40.74	54.32
6-10 Years	29	35.8	35.8	90.12
10 Years or above	08	9.88	9.88	100.0
Salary in BDT				
Below 20000	2	2.47	2.47	2.47
20000-35000	17	20.99	20.99	23.46
35000-55000	28	34.57	34.57	58.03
55000-100000	26	32.10	32.10	90.13
100000 or Above	8	9.87	9.87	100.0

Source: Author

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Table 4: Motivation level of the employees by gender comparison

Factors	Male		Female		Ranking	
	M	SD	M	SD	Male	Female
Overall level of motivation	2.1833	0.5365	2.15	0.5871		
Salary and other financial incentives	4.4333	0.6609	4.3809	0.6577	6	6
Factors	Male		Female		Ranking	
	M	SD	M	SD	Male	Female
Feeling of team spirit and cooperation	4.5167	0.7477	4.7619	0.5389	5	1
Work is valued and appreciated/ Formal recognition	4.5667	0.7448	4.4286	0.9258	4	5
Flex-time	3.9667	1.0571	3.9048	1.1791	8	8
Challenging and interesting task	4.8167	0.4691	3.9523	0.4629	1	7
Job security	4.6167	0.6402	4.6667	0.4830	3	3
Good working environment	4.1	0.7961	4.7143	0.5606	7	2

Source: Author

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Table 5: Motivation level of employees by age comparison (Mean Value)

Factors	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-45
Overall level of motivation	2.0937	2.4285	2.375	2
Salary and other financial incentives	4.4848	4.7576	4.5	2.4286
Opportunities for career growth and development	4.5152	4.7879	4.5	4.5714
Feeling of team spirit and cooperation	4.6364	4.6969	4.625	3.7143
Work is valued and appreciated/ Formal recognition	4.5455	4.6667	4	4.4286
Flex-time	3.9394	3.9697	3.875	4
Challenging and interesting task	4.6061	4.4243	4.875	5
Factors	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-45
Job security	4.7419	4.6364	4.5125	4.4287
Good working environment	4.2258	4.2493	3.875	4.2857

Source: Author