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An Empirical Study Of Parameters Influencing Employee Motivation In The Hospitality Industry With Reference To The Leela Palace Chennai

S Priyadharshini D1

MBA Students, School of Management studies, Sathyabama Institute of science and Technology

Dr. M John Paul D2

Assistant Professor, School of Management studies, Sathyabama Institute of science and Technology

Abstract:

The hospitality industry is highly service-oriented and customer-centric, making employee motivation a critical determinant of service quality and organizational performance. This study, titled "An Empirical Study of Parameters Influencing Employee Motivation in the Hospitality Industry with Reference to The Leela Palace Chennai," aims to identify and analyse the key factors that influence employee motivation and their impact on job performance and job satisfaction. Primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 140 employees across departments including HR, Front Office, Finance, Food & Beverage, Housekeeping, Engineering, Sales & Marketing, and Spa. Statistical tools including Percentage Analysis, Chi-Square tests, One-Way ANOVA, and Pearson Correlation were employed for analysis. The findings reveal that both intrinsic factors (recognition, personal growth, responsibility) and extrinsic factors (salary, job security, incentives) significantly influence employee motivation. A positive work environment, effective leadership, and supportive management contribute substantially to employee satisfaction. Key findings show that 74.3% of respondents agree that training and development opportunities are provided, 75% feel working conditions are safe and comfortable, and 65% feel overall motivated and satisfied. The study concludes that a balanced approach integrating financial and non-financial motivational strategies enhances employee performance, service quality, and long-term retention in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Employee Motivation, Hospitality Industry, Job Satisfaction, Intrinsic Factors, Extrinsic Factors, The Leela Palace Chennai, Work Environment, Leadership.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The hospitality industry occupies a central role in India's economic development and service sector. As one of the fastest-growing industries globally, it demands consistently high standards of service delivery, where the quality of employee performance directly determines customer satisfaction and organizational success. The Leela Palace Chennai, one of India's leading luxury hotel brands, serves as an ideal context for studying employee motivation as it employs a diverse, multi-departmental workforce in a highly competitive and customer-centric environment.

Employee motivation refers to the psychological process that initiates, guides, and sustains an individual's work-related behaviour. It is the level of willingness, enthusiasm, and commitment that an employee demonstrates towards achieving organizational goals. Motivation is shaped by both intrinsic factors — such as recognition, personal growth, responsibility, and a sense of achievement — and extrinsic factors — such as salary, incentives, job security, and working conditions.

In an industry characterized by high employee turnover, seasonal fluctuations, and intense service pressure, understanding what motivates employees is essential for building a productive, loyal, and high-performing workforce. This study investigates the parameters influencing employee motivation at The Leela Palace Chennai, evaluating how motivational strategies affect job performance, job satisfaction, and overall organizational effectiveness.

1.2 Review of Literature

Kotler & Keller (2016) emphasized that effective organizational strategies must be grounded in an understanding of human behaviour, including employee motivation. In the hospitality context, motivation determines service quality and customer satisfaction at every touchpoint.

Chiang & Jang (2020) revisited Expectancy Theory in the hotel context, demonstrating that employees are motivated when they believe their effort leads to desirable outcomes. The study highlighted that transparent reward systems and clear communication significantly improve motivation levels.

Erkutlu & Chafra (2020) explored the impact of transformational leadership on employee motivation in the hospitality sector, finding that employees working under transformational leaders exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, engagement, and motivation. Supportive and vision-driven leadership was found to foster a positive work environment.

Demerouti & Bakker (2021) applied the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model to hospitality settings, explaining that job resources such as managerial support, training, autonomy, and career opportunities significantly enhance motivation. The study found that balancing job demands with resources reduces burnout and increases engagement.

Formosa (2025) examined the mediating role of job satisfaction between leadership and employee motivation, concluding that job satisfaction acts as a critical bridge connecting organizational practices with employee motivation outcomes. Ali & Anwar (2021) similarly confirmed that rewards, recognition, and supportive management are the most significant drivers of job performance in hospitality.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to examine and analyse the key parameters influencing employee motivation in the hospitality industry, with specific reference to The Leela Palace Chennai. Specific objectives include: (i) analysing the demographic profile of employees at The Leela Palace Chennai; (ii) identifying the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors that influence employee performance; (iii) evaluating the impact of organizational support, leadership, and work environment on employee motivation; (iv) examining the relationship between employee motivation and job satisfaction; and (v) providing actionable recommendations to strengthen motivational strategies in the hospitality sector.

1.4 Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive research design. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to 140 employees across departments including HR, Front Office, Finance, Food & Beverage, Housekeeping, Engineering, Sales & Marketing, and Spa at The Leela Palace Chennai. Non-probability convenience sampling was employed. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: Section A for demographic information and Section B for motivation-related Likert-scale questions (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The study was conducted over a period of four months in 2025–2026.

Statistical tools employed include Percentage Analysis to describe the distribution of responses, Chi-Square Test to examine associations between demographic variables and motivational factors, One-Way ANOVA to test mean differences across age groups, and Pearson Correlation to determine the strength and direction of relationships between key variables.

2. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

2.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic profile of the 140 respondents is summarised below. The majority are male (63%), predominantly in the below-25 age group (43%), and concentrated in HR (25%) and Front Office (20%) departments. Most respondents (61%) have below 5 years of work experience, reflecting a young and emerging workforce.

Table 2.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	88	63%
	Female	52	37%
Age Group	Below 25 years	60	43%
	25–35 years	45	32%
	36–45 years	22	16%
	Above 45 years	13	9%
Department	HR	35	25%
	Front Office	28	20%
	Finance	20	14%
	Food & Beverage	22	16%
	Housekeeping	12	9%
	Others (Engg./Sales/Spa)	23	16%
Work Experience	Below 5 years	85	61%
	6–10 years	35	25%
	11–15 years	12	9%
	Above 15 years	8	5%

Interpretation: The demographic profile reveals a predominantly young, male, and relatively less-experienced workforce. HR and Front Office departments contribute the largest share of respondents, reflecting their frontline role in service delivery. The young workforce composition underscores the need for growth-oriented and recognition-based motivational strategies.

2.2 Motivational Factors Analysis

Table 2.2 presents the distribution of employee responses across key motivational statements measured on a Likert scale (Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly Agree).

Table 2.2: Employee Responses to Key Motivational Statements

Statement	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
Awards, rewards & recognition increase motivation	–	–	67.9%	–
Promotions & salary increments motivate better performance	14.3%	21.4%	34.3%	30.0%
Supervisor/manager motivates and supports me	15.0%	25.7%	28.6%	30.7%
Opportunity to express opinions in my department	14.3%	20.0%	36.4%	29.3%
Management provides adequate support	9.3%	24.3%	40.0%	26.4%
Coworker support helps me stay motivated	11.4%	20.7%	37.9%	30.0%
I feel secure about my job in this organization	12.9%	17.9%	35.0%	34.3%
Freedom to use own judgment in performing duties	13.6%	24.3%	27.9%	34.3%
Overall, I feel motivated and satisfied with my job	13.6%	21.4%	32.1%	32.9%

Interpretation: Across all motivational dimensions, the combined Agree and Strongly Agree responses consistently exceed 60%, indicating a generally positive motivational environment. Job security (69.3%), coworker support (67.9%), recognition (67.9%), and management support (66.4%) emerge as the strongest motivational drivers. The relatively high neutral responses in some categories (particularly supervisor support at 25.7%) indicate potential for further improvement.

2.3 Likert-Scale Summary Analysis

Table 2.3 presents an overall summary of Likert-scale responses across all motivational statements, capturing average response distribution.

Table 2.3: Overall Likert-Scale Response Summary

Response Category	Average Percentage (%)	Interpretation
Strongly Agree	31.1%	High positive endorsement
Agree	35.2%	Strong agreement with motivational factors
Neutral	21.9%	Moderate / undecided responses
Disagree	13.0%	Low level of disagreement
Total	100%	140 Respondents

Inference: The data reveals that over 66% of responses fall within the Agree–Strongly Agree range, confirming that The Leela Palace Chennai maintains a positive motivational environment. The 21.9% neutral rate identifies opportunities for strengthening communication and engagement strategies.

3. STATISTICAL TESTS

3.1 One-Way ANOVA: Age Group vs. Employee Motivation

H₀: There is no significant difference between age groups and the variable studied (employee motivation).

H₁: There is a significant difference between age groups and the variable studied.

Table 3.1: One-Way ANOVA — Age Group vs. Employee Motivation

Source	Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4.392	3	1.464	1.421	0.239
Within Groups	140.151	136	1.031	–	–
Total	144.543	139	–	–	–

The significance value of 0.239 exceeds the 0.05 threshold. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted — there is no statistically significant difference between age groups with respect to employee motivation levels. This finding suggests that motivational drivers at The Leela Palace Chennai are relatively consistent across different age cohorts, indicating the organization's broad-based motivational approach is effective across all generations.

3.2 Chi-Square Test: Department vs. Motivational Factors

H₀: There is no significant association between the variables.

H₁: There is a significant association between the variables.

Table 3.2: Chi-Square Test — Department vs. Motivational Factors

Chi-Square Test	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.320	9	0.502
Likelihood Ratio	10.057	9	0.346
Linear-by-Linear Association	4.166	1	0.041
N of Valid Cases	140	–	–

The Pearson Chi-Square value of 8.320 with significance 0.502 exceeds the 0.05 threshold, so the null hypothesis is accepted — there is no general significant association between department and motivational factors. However, the Linear-by-Linear Association value of 4.166 (Sig. = 0.041) reveals a meaningful linear relationship, suggesting that structured, role-specific motivational interventions may yield incremental improvements across departments.

3.3 Pearson Correlation: Age vs. Job Security

H₀: There is no significant relationship between age and job security.

H₁: There is a significant relationship between age and job security.

Table 3.3: Pearson Correlation — Age vs. Job Security

Variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Age	1	–	140
I feel secure about my job in this organization	.173*	0.041	140

A statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.173$, $p = 0.041$) was found between age and job security. As employee age increases, the sense of job security rises slightly. While the correlation is weak, its significance confirms that older employees associate tenure with greater organizational stability. The null hypothesis is rejected — age does have a slight but statistically meaningful relationship with job security perceptions.

4. FINDINGS, SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

4.1 Key Findings

This study provides comprehensive insights into the motivational landscape at The Leela Palace Chennai. The major findings are presented below:

Table 4.1: Summary of Key Findings

Finding	Percentage / Result
Male employees constitute the majority of respondents	63% Male, 37% Female
Majority of employees are below 25 years of age	43% Below 25 years
Most employees have below 5 years of experience	61% Below 5 years
Rewards and recognition increase motivation	67.9% Agree/Strongly Agree
Training and development opportunities are provided	74.3% Agree/Strongly Agree
Working conditions are safe and comfortable	75% Agree/Strongly Agree
Job security promotes motivation	69.3% Agree/Strongly Agree
Overall job motivation and satisfaction	65% Agree/Strongly Agree
No significant age-group difference in motivation (ANOVA)	$F = 1.421, \text{Sig.} = 0.239$
Age positively correlates with job security (Correlation)	$r = 0.173, \text{Sig.} = 0.041$

4.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed for The Leela Palace Chennai and similar hospitality organizations:

The organization should strengthen employee engagement programs to further improve motivation and satisfaction levels, particularly targeting the 21.9% of neutral responses. Career growth and promotion pathways should be clearly communicated to retain young, less-experienced employees who constitute the majority of the workforce. Training and development programs should be expanded and made more accessible across all departments, building skills and driving long-term performance.

Management communication must be enhanced to reduce ambiguity and increase employee confidence. Recognition programs — both monetary and non-monetary — should be formalized and implemented consistently. Facilities such as transport, accommodation, and cafeteria should be upgraded where satisfaction is moderate. Regular feedback surveys would help organizations continuously understand and respond to evolving employee needs, supporting a culture of continuous improvement.

4.3 Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the parameters influencing employee motivation in the hospitality industry, with specific reference to The Leela Palace Chennai. The findings confirm that employee motivation is a multidimensional construct shaped by both intrinsic factors — including recognition, personal growth, job satisfaction, and a sense of achievement — and extrinsic factors — such as salary, incentives, job security, and working conditions.

The study demonstrates that The Leela Palace Chennai maintains a broadly positive motivational environment, with over 66% of responses affirming key motivational factors. Working conditions (75%), training and development (74.3%), and job security (69.3%) emerged as the strongest areas of employee

satisfaction. Statistical analysis confirms that motivational perceptions are broadly consistent across age groups (ANOVA: $F = 1.421$, $p = 0.239$), indicating an inclusive organizational culture. A positive relationship between age and job security ($r = 0.173$, $p = 0.041$) further validates the role of experience and tenure in building organizational commitment.

In conclusion, organizations in the hospitality sector that invest in a balanced combination of financial and non-financial motivational strategies — supported by transformational leadership, employee recognition, and continuous development opportunities — are best positioned to achieve higher service quality, reduced turnover, and sustained organizational performance. The Leela Palace Chennai's motivational framework serves as a valuable benchmark for the broader hospitality industry.

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