

## **Intrinsic Vs. Extrinsic Motivation: Impacts on Employee Engagement in the Education Sector**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Human resources are often regarded as the basis of an organization's success. Achieving organizational goals is not solely dependent on strategy or structure but also on how well employees are motivated, both intrinsically and extrinsically. Intrinsic motivation, which derives from personal satisfaction and a sense of purpose and extrinsic motivation driven by external rewards, are essential in shaping employee engagement. It is within this context that the present study pursued to explore the dynamic relationship between these two forms of motivation and their impact on educators' engagement within their professional roles. The methodology of the study was carefully designed to examine this relationship. A structured questionnaire was developed, encompassing three main areas: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and employee engagement. To ensure the reliability and precision of the data analysis, quantitative analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and correlation analysis to study the relationship among variables studied. Results of the study demonstrate that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were found to be present at satisfactory and highly satisfactory levels, suggesting that respondents not only derive personal fulfillment from their work but are also motivated by external rewards such as monetary incentives. These findings led to a clear conclusion: there is a positive and significant relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and employee engagement among educators. This positive outcome, however, does not occur easily. It is the result of continuous efforts by the management to create an environment where both internal drivers (such as a sense of purpose and appreciation) and external factors (such as rewards and monetary incentives) are nurtured. By addressing these motivational needs, management can foster a more engaged and productive workforce, ultimately benefiting the organization as a whole.

Keywords: Extrinsic motivation, Intrinsic motivation, Employee engagement

### **INTRODUCTION**

Employee motivation is a fundamental driver of productivity, performance, and engagement in any organization, and this is especially true within the education sector, where employees play a crucial role in shaping future generations. Motivation influences the degree to which employees are engaged in their work, directly impacting their productivity, commitment, and overall job satisfaction. Research has consistently demonstrated that highly motivated employees exhibit greater enthusiasm for their work, take more initiative, and contribute to organizational success in meaningful ways (Amabile, 1993; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Employee motivation can be categorized into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal drives that inspire individuals to engage in activities for personal satisfaction, interest, or the inherent enjoyment of the task itself (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, an individual may be intrinsically motivated by the desire to improve their skills, the challenge of solving complex problems, or the satisfaction derived from accomplishing a task. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation involves external incentives such as monetary rewards, recognition, job security, or promotions (Herzberg, 1959). Extrinsic rewards are often tangible and are used by organizations as strategies to encourage specific behaviors.

In recent years, the concept of employee engagement has gained prominence as a key outcome of effective motivation strategies. Employee engagement refers to the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral commitment of employees toward their work and the organization. Engaged employees are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of performance, remain with the organization longer, and contribute positively to the organizational culture (Shuck, 2010). Engagement is particularly important in the education sector, where the quality of service delivered by employees, such as instructors and administrators, directly affects student outcomes and the institution's overall success.

Employee engagement is critical in enhancing organizational performance, as it not only boosts individual productivity but also contributes to collective growth. Recent studies indicate that engaged employees bring more resilience and creativity to their roles, fostering a positive organizational culture. Baethge et al. (2022) highlight that engaged employees are generally more adaptable and less prone to burnout, which positively impacts team dynamics and organizational outcomes. Another study by Parker (2023) suggests that high engagement levels can lead to improved work quality and innovation as employees feel more invested in their work.

Motivation and engagement are closely linked, as motivation serves as the driving force that fosters employee engagement. However, the degree to which intrinsic and extrinsic motivators influence engagement can vary significantly across different contexts and employee groups. Previous research has explored the role of motivation in shaping employee engagement. However, there remains a need to further investigate how these relationships manifest within the education sector. Educational institutions face unique challenges in motivating their employees due to the nature of the work, which is often intellectually and emotionally demanding, with limited financial rewards compared to other industries.

This study seeks to contribute to the understanding of motivation and engagement by examining the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and employee engagement among employees in the education sector. Specifically, it aims to determine which form of motivation—intrinsic or extrinsic—plays a more significant role in fostering engagement, and how these dynamics can inform more effective motivation strategies for educational institutions. By exploring these relationships, this study provides some insights for administrators, and human resource professionals within the education sector who seek to enhance employee engagement and improve organizational performance.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Motivation**

Motivation is a key driver of human behavior in organizational settings, acting as a fundamental element that influences employees' commitment, productivity, and job satisfaction. Defined as the inner drive that propels individuals to act towards specific goals, motivation can be both intrinsic, arising from internal satisfaction and fulfillment, and extrinsic, encouraged by external rewards or recognition (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Theories of motivation, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, provide frameworks for understanding how personal and workplace factors impact motivation. Contemporary research suggests that aligning motivational strategies with employees' personal values and job roles significantly enhances engagement, creativity, and overall performance (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Locke & Latham, 2002). Therefore, a nuanced understanding of motivational dynamics is essential for organizations aiming to foster a productive and satisfied workforce.

The exploration of motivation within organizational contexts has been significantly shaped by foundational theories, with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) being one of the most widely cited frameworks. Maslow posits that individuals are motivated by a hierarchical structure of needs, beginning with basic physiological requirements—such as food and shelter progressing to safety, social belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. In an organizational context, this theory implies that employees are driven by a combination of these needs, where the fulfillment of basic needs, such as job security and salary, serves as a prerequisite for motivation. These foundational needs can significantly influence employee behavior, particularly in how they approach their roles and responsibilities. For instance, when basic needs are not fulfilled, employees may experience anxiety and dissatisfaction, which can reduce their ability to engage fully with their work.

Building on Maslow's framework, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) provides further insights into employee motivation by differentiating between hygiene factors and motivators. Herzberg argues that hygiene factors including salary, job and working conditions are essential for preventing dissatisfaction; however, they do not directly contribute to job satisfaction or motivation. In contrast, motivators, such as achievement and opportunities for personal development, are intrinsic factors that significantly enhance job satisfaction and foster greater motivation (Herzberg, 1959). This distinction highlights the dual role of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in shaping employee behavior. For example, while financial rewards may attract employees to a position, it is the presence of motivators that sustains their commitment and engagement in the long term (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). This finding underscores the importance of designing work environments that not only meet basic needs but also cultivate intrinsic motivators.

In a different view, Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) explain that employees are motivated when they perceive a clear relationship between their efforts, performance and the rewards or recognition. This theory emphasizes the significance of aligning employee goals with organizational objectives, particularly within educational institutions, where clarity regarding how individual contributions impact institutional success is very important. Research supports this perspective, indicating that when employees believe their efforts will lead to desirable outcomes, their engagement levels increase (Locke & Latham, 2002). Therefore, effective communication of goals and expected outcomes can foster an

environment where employees feel empowered and motivated to achieve both personal and organizational objectives.

Another influential framework in the study of motivation is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (2000). This theory distinguishes between autonomous demotivation—closely related to intrinsic motivation—and controlled motivation, which aligns more closely with extrinsic factors. SDT posits that individuals are more motivated when they feel their actions are self-determined, engaging in tasks driven by personal interest or internalized values rather than external pressures (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This theory highlights the importance of three key psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, particularly in educational settings where employees often seek meaning and purpose in their work. Studies have demonstrated that when these needs are satisfied, employees exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation, leading to increased engagement and overall job satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Van den Broeck et al., 2016).

Connecting these theoretical perspectives, it is evident that employee engagement is deeply related to motivation. Research consistently indicates that intrinsic motivation, fostered through satisfying higher-order needs, significantly enhances employee engagement levels. For instance, a meta-analysis by Rich et al. (2010) found that intrinsic motivation is a strong predictor of employee engagement, as engaged employees are not only more productive but also more committed to their organizations. On the other hand, dependence solely on extrinsic motivators, such as financial rewards, may lead to temporary boosts in engagement but fail to sustain long-term commitment (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). This reinforces the argument that a comprehensive understanding of motivation, integrating both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, is essential for developing effective strategies to enhance employee engagement within educational institutions and beyond.

### **Employee Engagement**

Research on employee engagement consistently highlights the key role of motivation in fostering engagement. Engaged employees demonstrate a connection to their work, characterized by high levels of energy, dedication, and resilience (Shuck, 2010). These employees are not only absorbed in their tasks but also show enthusiasm, which significantly influences their productivity and overall job satisfaction. A growing body of literature suggests that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators contribute to employee engagement; however, the relative importance of each motivator can vary based on context and individual preferences (Gagne & Deci, 2005). This dynamic interaction raises critical questions regarding how organizations can effectively harness both types of motivation to enhance engagement.

Khan's (2011) study on employee engagement within educational institutions emphasizes the contrasting impacts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. His findings reveal that while extrinsic factors—such as salary and job security—are particularly influential for short-term engagement, intrinsic motivators—including personal growth and a sense of accomplishment—are more strongly associated with long-term engagement and overall job satisfaction. This distinction suggests that while extrinsic rewards can provide immediate motivation, they may not be sufficient to sustain engagement over time. As such, organizations must prioritize intrinsic motivators to cultivate an engaged workforce.

In the same vein, Margaretha et al. (2021) highlight that employee engagement which is based on a strong psychological connection to one's job, has a substantial impact on intrinsic motivation. Their study illustrates that engaged employees, who find personal significance in their roles, demonstrate increased enthusiasm, commitment, and dedication to their work. Similarly, Srivastava and Madan (2021) emphasize that when employees feel aligned with the organization's core values, their motivation is heightened, reinforcing a proactive work approach. Vizano et al. (2021) add that a supportive and inclusive environment not only nurtures intrinsic motivation but also fosters a deeper sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. Together, these findings underscore that intrinsic motivators—such as meaningful work, and personal growth—are essential for sustaining long-term engagement, suggesting that organizations should prioritize these elements to foster a genuinely motivated and productive workforce.

Adding to this perspective, Amabile (1993) introduces the concept of "motivational synergy," positing that the optimal combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators can lead to heightened levels of engagement. According to Amabile, when employees experience both intrinsic satisfaction from the work itself and extrinsic rewards such as monetary incentives, they are more likely to exhibit creativity, innovation, and sustained commitment to their roles. This insight emphasizes the necessity for organizations to adopt a balanced approach to motivation, integrating both types of motivators to enhance engagement effectively.

Focusing on the education sector, Habte (2016) found that intrinsic motivation applies a greater influence on the psychological aspects of employee engagement compared to extrinsic motivation. This observation aligns with the findings of Deci and Ryan (2000), who contend that intrinsic motivation fosters sustainable and self-determined behaviors. Employees who derive personal meaning and satisfaction from their work are more likely to remain engaged, even in the absence of external rewards. Nevertheless, Cerasoli et al. (2014) caution that an overemphasis on extrinsic rewards can undermine intrinsic motivation, potentially leading to decreased engagement over time. This duality highlights the need for educational institutions to carefully consider their motivational strategies to ensure they do not reduce intrinsic engagement drivers.

Despite the substantial body of research on motivation and engagement, there are gaps persist, particularly concerning the education sector. A significant portion of existing studies has focused on corporate environments, where motivational dynamics may differ from those in educational institutions. Educators often face unique challenges, including high emotional demands, limited financial rewards, and the complexities of balancing multiple roles. Understanding how motivation strategies can be adapted to this context is crucial for developing effective interventions to enhance employee engagement.

Furthermore, while much of the literature has concentrated on the impacts of extrinsic motivators such as salary and benefits, there remains a need for research that explores into the role of intrinsic motivators in fostering engagement. Given the emotionally demanding nature of work in education, intrinsic motivators like personal growth and a sense of purpose are likely to play a critical role in sustaining long-term engagement among educators (Saks, 2006).

This study aims to address these gaps by examining the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and employee engagement within the education sector. By focusing on educators, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how various motivation

strategies can be optimized to improve engagement in this context. Ultimately, bridging the gap between motivation and engagement not only benefits the individual educators but also enhances the overall effectiveness of educational institutions in achieving their goals.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a cross-sectional, quantitative research design to explore the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and employee engagement within the education sector. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from a representative sample of employees, focusing on their levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and how these factors influenced their engagement at work. A quantitative approach was chosen due to its ability to provide clear, objective measures of the variables in question and allow for the statistical analysis of relationships between variables studied.

The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from previously validated scales on intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and employee engagement. To ensure the validity of the instrument, items were carefully selected based on their relevance to the education sector, and slight modifications were made to adapt them to the context of this study. A five-point Likert scale was used for all items, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The questionnaire was divided into three main sections that is intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and employee engagement. Regarding intrinsic motivation, the items included questions related to personal satisfaction, interest in work, the enjoyment of tasks, and the sense of accomplishment employees derive from their work. Next, for extrinsic motivation, questions in this section focused on external rewards, such as salary, bonuses as well as promotions. Finally, on employee engagement, this section assessed the extent to which employees were emotionally and cognitively invested in their work, using items that measured enthusiasm, dedication, and a sense of purpose.

The previous research this study has focused on is discussed in this section. The topic of discussion included variables impacting household debt in a few countries, including Malaysia. The information is shown in Table 1, which is arranged in the order of the most recent study to the one that came before it.

### **Population and Sampling**

Population refers to the group of individuals or subjects who meet the criteria set by the researcher to be selected as respondents for the study (Asari, 2018). It forms the foundation for the researcher's measurement framework for the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In this study, the target population consists of educators from a school located in Tanjong Karang, Selangor. A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that every member of the population had an equal chance of being selected for the study. This method helps reduce sampling bias and ensures that the sample is representative of the broader population in the education sector.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection process was conducted over a three-week period, utilizing Google Forms as the primary method. Given the study's objective and the need to reach a wide range of

participants efficiently, Google Forms provided an ideal platform for gathering data. The online format enabled respondents to conveniently access the questionnaire from any location with internet access, ensuring greater participation flexibility.

A link to the questionnaire was disseminated via email to the target population, accompanied by clear instructions on how to complete the form. To increase the response rate, follow-up reminders were sent periodically throughout the data collection stage. This approach helped to reduce potential issues such as non-responses or delayed participation.

The use of Google Forms also offered logistical advantages. Its user-friendly interface simplified the process of data entry, reducing potential errors associated with manual data input. Additionally, the digital nature of the platform allowed for quick exporting of responses into formats compatible with various statistical analysis software. This facilitated for more efficient processing of the collected data.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents, while inferential statistics were employed to test the relationships between intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and employee engagement. Pearson’s correlation analysis was conducted to assess the strength and direction of these relationships.

### **Descriptive Analysis**

As shown in Table 1, majority of respondents were female (78.57%), and the largest age group was between 39 and 48 years, accumulating 44.29% of the sample. Most respondents held a degree (77.14%), and 84.29% were married. These characteristics suggest a relatively experienced workforce with a strong representation of women in the education sector.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	15	21.43%
Female	55	78.57%
<b>Age</b>		
18-28	10	14.29%
29-38	11	15.71%
39-48	31	44.29%
49 and above	18	25.71%
<b>Qualification</b>		
Diploma	4	5.71%
Degree	54	77.14%
Master's and above	12	17.14%
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	59	84.29%
Single	11	15.71%

The distribution of respondents across different age groups and educational backgrounds suggests a workforce that is not only diverse in terms of experience but also in terms of

professional development. This variety provided a strong foundation for analyzing the relationships between motivation and engagement in this context.

### **Reliability and Validity Test**

To assess the reliability of the scales used in this study, Cronbach’s Alpha was calculated for each variable. The results indicated that all scales had acceptable levels of internal consistency, with Cronbach’s Alpha values exceeding 0.70 for most variables. Specifically, the scale measuring intrinsic motivation had an Alpha value of 0.709, extrinsic motivation had an Alpha value of 0.582, and employee engagement had the highest Alpha value of 0.870. While the value for extrinsic motivation was slightly low, it was still within the acceptable range particularly in studies involving psychological constructs. Several scholars have highlighted that Cronbach's Alpha can sometimes underestimate reliability, especially with shorter scales or complex constructs (Herman, 2015). Furthermore, it's been noted that psychological constructs are often multidimensional, and Alpha values between 0.50 and 0.70 are considered reasonable in some cases (Taber, 2018; Trizano-Hermosilla & Alvarado, 2016).

### **Inferential Analysis**

Pearson’s correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and significance of the relationships between intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, and employee engagement. The results, presented in Table 2, revealed significant positive correlations between both forms of motivation and employee engagement. Intrinsic motivation was found to have a stronger correlation with employee engagement ( $r = 0.695$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that employees who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to be engaged in their work. Extrinsic motivation also showed a positive correlation with engagement ( $r = 0.629$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), although the relationship was slightly weaker than that of intrinsic motivation.

**Table 2**  
*Correlation Coefficients Between Variables*

	<b>Correlation Coefficient</b>	<b>Significance Level</b>
Intrinsic Motivation	0.695**	$p < 0.01$
Extrinsic Motivation	0.629**	$p < 0.01$

*\*\* $p < 0.01$ , two-tailed*

These results suggest that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play significant roles in fostering employee engagement, with intrinsic motivation being the slightly stronger predictor. This finding is consistent with previous research by Deci and Ryan (2000) and Amabile (1993), who argue that intrinsic motivation leads to more sustainable engagement over time, as employees who find personal satisfaction and meaning in their work are more likely to remain engaged even in the absence of external rewards.

These results highlight the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation among employees in educational institutions. While extrinsic rewards such as salary and recognition are important for maintaining engagement, the findings suggest that creating an environment where employees find personal meaning and satisfaction in their work is crucial for sustaining long-term engagement.

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between motivation and employee engagement in the education sector. Consistent with previous research, the



results indicate that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators contribute to employee engagement, with intrinsic motivation playing a slightly stronger role. These findings have several implications for educational institutions and policymakers seeking to enhance employee engagement and improve organizational performance.

## **DISCUSSION**

For educational institutions, the findings of this study highlight the importance of developing motivation strategies that address both intrinsic and extrinsic needs. While extrinsic rewards such as salary and job security are necessary for preventing dissatisfaction, they are not sufficient for fostering long-term engagement. Educational institutions should focus on creating work environments that provide employees with opportunities for personal growth and meaningful work. This could involve offering professional development programs, recognizing individual contributions through non-monetary rewards, and ensuring that employees have the autonomy to pursue their professional interests.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that intrinsic motivation is particularly important for fostering engagement in the education sector. Educational employees often face high levels of emotional and intellectual demand, and the work itself may not always provide immediate external rewards. By emphasizing the intrinsic value of the work, such as its impact on student outcomes and the broader community, institutions can foster a deeper sense of commitment and engagement among their employees.

In addition, the results of this study also contribute to the broader literature on motivation and engagement. The finding that intrinsic motivation is slightly a stronger predictor of engagement than extrinsic motivation supports the theories of Deci and Ryan (2000) and Herzberg (1959), who argue that intrinsic motivators are more sustainable and lead to greater job satisfaction. This study adds to the growing body of evidence that suggests intrinsic motivation is particularly important in sectors where employees are driven by a sense of purpose and personal fulfillment, such as education.

However, the study also highlights the importance of extrinsic rewards in maintaining engagement, particularly in the short term. While intrinsic motivation may lead to deeper engagement, extrinsic rewards such as salary are necessary for ensuring that employees feel valued and supported in their roles. These findings suggest that a balanced approach to motivation is necessary, where both intrinsic and extrinsic factors are addressed to foster engagement.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

While this study provides important understandings on the relationship between motivation and engagement, there are some limitations that exist. First, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to draw causal conclusions about the relationships between the variables. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial for examining how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation influence employee engagement over time. Such research could provide ideas into the dynamics of motivation and engagement as they evolve, offering a clearer understanding of the long-term effects of various motivational strategies.

Second, the study focused on a specific sample of employees in the education sector, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors or contexts. Different industries

may have unique motivational drivers and engagement factors. For instance, the motivations of employees in corporate settings may differ significantly from those in educational institutions. Future research should explore these relationships in a broader range of industries, including corporate, healthcare, and non-profit sectors, to determine whether the findings hold across various contexts.

Another area for future research could involve qualitative studies that explore employees' perceptions of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in greater depth. Conducting interviews or focus groups could provide more knowledge into how employees experience motivation and how these experiences influence their engagement levels. Understanding the motivational factors from the employee's perspective can help organizations to adapt their strategies effectively.

Finally, future research could investigate the impact of external factors, such as economic conditions, organizational changes, and cultural influences, on employee motivation and engagement. These factors could play a significant role in shaping how employees respond to motivational strategies, and understanding these dynamics could lead to more informed decision-making for educational leaders and human resource professionals.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study examined the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and employee engagement in the education sector, highlighting the significance of both forms of motivation in fostering engagement. From the findings, it shows the importance of creating supportive work environments, providing professional development opportunities, implementing recognition systems, and fostering a sense of community to enhance motivation and engagement among educational employees.

By focusing on these strategies, educational institutions can create a culture that values employee contributions and fosters a sense of purpose and commitment. Ultimately, enhancing employee motivation and engagement not only benefits the individual employees but also contributes to the overall success of the institution and the achievement of positive student outcomes.

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