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Investigating the Relationship between Employee Motivation and Performance in State Institutions in Sierra Leone: An Assessment of Factors, Impact, and Strategies for Improvement

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The study investigates the nexus between employee motivation and performance within state institutions in sierra Leone. Utilizing a mixed research method, combining qualitative interviews with focus group discussion, and quantitative surveys, data was collected from a sample of Fifty employees at state institutions in Sierra Leone. The results reveal a concerning lack of motivation among employees, with 60% reporting dissatisfaction. Scarce resources and lack of commitment from heads of institution emerged as significant obstacles to maintaining high levels of motivations. The demographic analysis also shows that respondents are mostly male 58%, with majority of them being in their mid-to-late 20s with 52%, this indicates that a younger workforce maybe experiencing difficulties with motivation when they first begin their careers. This study also emphasis the necessity for Sierra Leone state institutions to increase employee productivity and organizational effectiveness and address the lack of motivation.

Keywords: Motivation, Performance, Sierra Leone, Determinant, employee motivation

INTRODUCTION

Managing people in the workplace is an indispensable part of the management process, and understanding the critical importance of people in organizations means realizing that human and organizational factors are synonymous (Anyim,2012). According to Robbins, each person has unique needs, and the way a situation and a person interact can either help or hurt someone's motivation. When people think that reaching a desired goal or receiving a reward will satisfy certain needs, they are motivated.(Sophie, 2021) Therefore, Motivation is an important issue for any public or private organization. For the success of any organization, motivation plays an important role. Employees are directly influenced by their motivation to satisfy their levels of self-esteem, physiological safety, social safety, psychological safety, and personal development. (Maslow) Motivation essentially aims to facilitate behavior modification. It is the motivation that allows people to work towards certain goals(Basu ,2023).

Institutions exist to achieve a mission and to deliver services to customers and other stakeholders(Kanneh, 2016). providing quality services to people is the sole reason why public institutions and organizations are established. These resources are used by these public institutions as inputs to produce outputs or goods and services for the public. Because, the laws that created them require them to respond to the public(Conteh, 2020).For an organization, employee motivation is very important because solving any problem involves both human and financial resources and the full utilization of human resources can only be achieved through motivation. It is evident that, outstanding employees may leave an organization when they become dissatisfied, several studies have indicated that most organizations are successful as a result of placing values on their employees, and most importantly investing in their employees' capacity building (Sawaneh, 2019).

In Sierra Leone, a key problem facing employees especially in the public sector, is the lack of commitment and loyalty to their work. It doesn't take much investigation to see that the average productivity loyalty and commitment of Sierra Leone workers to the organizations that employ them is disappointing. It's important to note that a supportive environment can boost productivity, reduce absenteeism, poor timekeeping, workforce turnover, and other signs of low morale. The challenge for management is to identify and understand how different motivational theories and strategies influence individual and organizational behavior.

As human behavior can be positive or negative for an organization, research into this will shed light on the best course of action to take. Efforts need to be focused on motivating employees because, as individuals, we expend a lot of energy trying to meet needs or complete tasks to achieve desired goals. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the relationship between employee motivation and performance in state institutions in Sierra Leone and provide answers to the following research questions:

1.   What are the main determinants of employee motivation in Sierra Leone's public institutions?
2.   How does employee performance in Sierra Leone's state institutions relate to motivation?
3.   What are the obstacles to preserving high levels of motivation among employees at state institutions?
4.   What strategies can be used in Sierra Leone's state institutions to improve performance and motivation among employees?

Study objectives.

1.   To examine the different factors that influence employee motivation in state institutions in Sierra Leone.
2.   To analyze the impact of motivation on employee performance within state institutions in Sierra Leone.
3.   To identify the challenges faced in maintaining high levels of motivation among employees
4.   To propose strategies for enhancing employee motivation and performance in Sierra Leone state Institutions.

Literature Review

Concept of Motivation

The key to a successful organization to maintaining the continuity of the work in a powerful manner and helping organizations to survive is motivation (Said, 2017)In times of political change, globalization, and high societal demands, public institutions must focus their efforts on the most valuable resource at their disposal: human capital. However, public organizations in many European countries face several human resource challenges, including constant competition with private sector organizations to attract and retain the best-qualified professionals, frequent reorganizations and staff reductions, and high levels of staff turnover. Organizations can only develop and thrive with well-prepared human resources in an era when their activities become increasingly complex, specific, and ever-changing. In this context, public institution management must identify the right solutions to motivate their employees to strive for higher performance standards, consolidate their commitment to the organization, encourage initiative and active participation in the workplace, and create the necessary conditions for individual and organizational development.(Alina 2015)Every organization either public or private is goal oriented and all efforts are gear towards the successful attainment of those goals and objectives. Therefore, for any organization to record any degree of meaningful success in the pursuit of its goals and aspirations, it must have the ability to create values (motivation) enough to compensate for the burden imposed upon employees. Such values or motivation can come in any form of good training policies, facilities, or incentives such as fringe benefits, promotion etc. so as to satisfy the need of the employees for enhanced performance (Nyameh, 2013).

Theories of Motivation

➢   Maslow theory of needs

   This theory was proposed by Abraham Maslow and is based on the assumption that people are motivated by a series of five universal needs. These needs are hierarchically ranked according to the order in which they influence human behavior.(Anyim,2012) Maslow believed that there are at least five sets of goals that can be referred to as basic needs and are physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. He further stated that people, including employees at organizations, are motivated by the desire to achieve or maintain the various conditions upon which these basic satisfactions rest and by certain more intellectual desires.

1.   Physiological or Basic needs: are deemed to be the lowest–level needs. These needs include the needs such as food and water. So long as physiological needs are unsatisfied, they exist as a driving or motivating force in a person's life. A hungry person has a felt need. This felt need sets up both psychological and physical tensions that manifest themselves in overt behaviors directed at reducing those tensions (getting something to eat).
2.   Safety or Security needs: the needs for shelter and security – become the motivators of human behavior. Safety needs include a desire for security, stability, dependency, protection, freedom from fear and anxiety, and a need for structure, order and law.
3.   Social needs or Belongingness: include the need for belongingness and love. Generally, as gregarious creatures, humans have a need to belong. In the workplace, this need may be satisfied by an ability to interact with one's co-workers and perhaps to be able to work collaboratively with these colleagues.
4.   Esteem needs: become the motivating needs. Esteem needs include the desire for self-respect, self-esteem, and the esteem of others. When focused externally, these needs also include the desire for reputation, prestige, status, fame, glory, dominance, recognition, attention, importance, and appreciation.
5.   Self-actualization needs: The highest need in Maslow's hierarchy is that of self-actualization the need for self-realization, continuous self-development, and the process of becoming all that a person is capable of becoming.

Figure 1: Maslow Needs Hierarchy

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory This is also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, which was derived from a study designed to test the concept that people have two sets of needs:

➢   Their needs as animals to avoid pain: and Their needs as humans to grow psychologically.
➢   Herzberg's (1966) study consisted of a series of interviews that sought to elicit responses to the following questions:
➢   Recall a time when you felt exceptionally good about your job. Why did you feel that way about the job? Did this feeling affect your job performance in any way? Did this feeling have an impact on your relationships or your well-being?
➢   Recall a time on the job that resulted in negative feelings. Describe the sequence of events that resulted in these negative feelings. From the outcome of the investigation, it was found that workers' happiness and unhappiness at work are based on two separate themes:

1.   Satisfiers (Motivators): Five factors stood out as strong determinants of job satisfaction: achievements, recognition, work itself, responsibility, and advancement. The last three factors were found to be most important for bringing about lasting changes in attitude. It should be noted that recognition refers to recognition for achievement as opposed to recognition in the human relations sense.

2.   Dissatisfiers (Hygiene Factors): The determinants of job dissatisfaction were found to be: company policy, administrative policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions. From the results, Herzberg (1966) concludes that the response people gave when they felt good about their jobs was significantly different from the response given when they felt bad. Certain characteristics tend to be consistently related to job satisfaction and others to job dissatisfaction. Intrinsic factors, such as work itself, responsibility, and achievement seem to be related to job satisfaction. On the other hand, dissatisfied respondents tended to cite extrinsic factors such as supervision, pay, company policies, and working conditions. According to Herzberg (1966), the factors leading to job satisfaction are separate and distinct from those that lead to job dissatisfaction. Therefore, managers who seek to eliminate factors that can create job dissatisfaction may bring about peace but not necessarily motivation. They will be placating their workforce rather than motivating them. As a result, conditions surrounding the job such as quality of supervision, pay, company policies, physical working conditions, relations with others and job security were characterized by Herzberg as hygiene factors. When they are adequate, people will not be dissatisfied; neither will they be satisfied. If we want to motivate people in their jobs, Herzberg suggested factors associated with the work itself or with the outcomes directly derived from it, such as promotional opportunities, opportunities for personal growth, recognition, responsibility and achievement. These are the characteristics that people find intrinsically rewarding.(Anyim,2012)

Equity Theory

  According to equity theory, individuals engage in social comparison by comparing their efforts and rewards to those of relevant others. Equity exists when people believe that the effort-to-reward ratio is the same for them as it is for others with whom they compare themselves. Inequity exists when people believe that their effort-to-reward ratio is different (usually negatively) than that of others with whom they compare themselves. There are two types of inequity: "under-reward" and "over-reward". Under-reward occurs when a person believes that he or she puts in more effort than another, but receives the same. (Kiruja, 2013)

Research Methodology

The researcher used both quantitative and qualitative methods to have detailed information about the topic and to understand the existing relationship between motivation and employee performance in state institutions.

Quantitative Method

The researcher used survey questions to systematically gather information on employee motivation levels and performance indicators within state institutions in Sierra Leone. Structured questionnaires were created to collect specific data on worker motivation and output, including both open-ended and closed-ended questions with predetermined response options. These questions were logically ordered to allow for statistical and quantitative analysis of the data.

Qualitative Method

Interview: The researcher interviewed administrators, managers, employees, and stakeholders to acquire insight into the motivation and factors of performance challenges.

Focus Group discussion: The researcher held discussions with respondents to explore nuanced perspectives on the relationship between motivation and performance.

Observation: Through this, the researcher observed the workplace dynamics and practices, and the behavior of employees was recorded**.**

Adopting the mixed method approach, (Quantitative and Qualitative) the researcher effectively determined the nexus between employees' motivation, and performance in Sierra Leones state institutions, and was also able to provide clear insights for effectiveness and enhancing employee well-being

Sample population

The sample population of this study consists of employees in state institutions in Sierra Leone.Fifty (50) employees were interviewed by the researcher following the random sampling method.

Data Analysis

Data collected from this study was analyzed using Exceland was presented in tables and charts.

RESULTS AND SUMMARY

Demographic of respondents

Figure 1 below shows that 58% of the respondents were male, and 42% were female, according to the analysis of the sex distribution. This may indicate the researcher captured more Males than Females in the study sample.
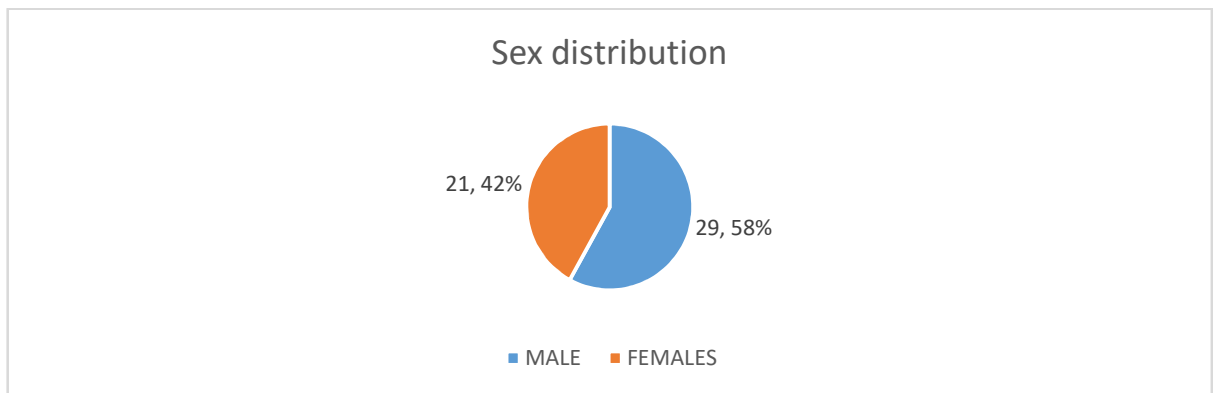
Figure 1: Respondent Sex Distribution
Source, Authors Field research march, 2024.

Table 1 below shows that, of the respondents, 40% were between the ages of 24 and 27, 20% were between the ages of 32 and 35, 8% were 36 years and older, 4% were between the ages of 20 and 23, and 28% were between the ages of 28 and 31. This implies that a considerable proportion of respondents to the survey were in their mid-to late-20s.
This age group frequently consists of young adults who are starting their careers and making the move from university to the workforce.

Table1: Respondent Sex Distribution

Responses	Frequency N	Percentage
20-23years	2	4
24-27years	20	40
28-31years	14	28
32-35years	10	20
36years	4	8
Total	**50**	**100%**

Source; Author's field research, March 2024

According to Figure two below, the majority of the respondents were police officers that represent 30%followed by revenue collectors 28%, health care workers 20% Teachers 12% Monitoring and evaluation officers 2% research officers 6%, social service officers, 10%while, planning officers 4%. From the data collected, it can be deduced that many police officers and revenue collectors were contacted during the survey.
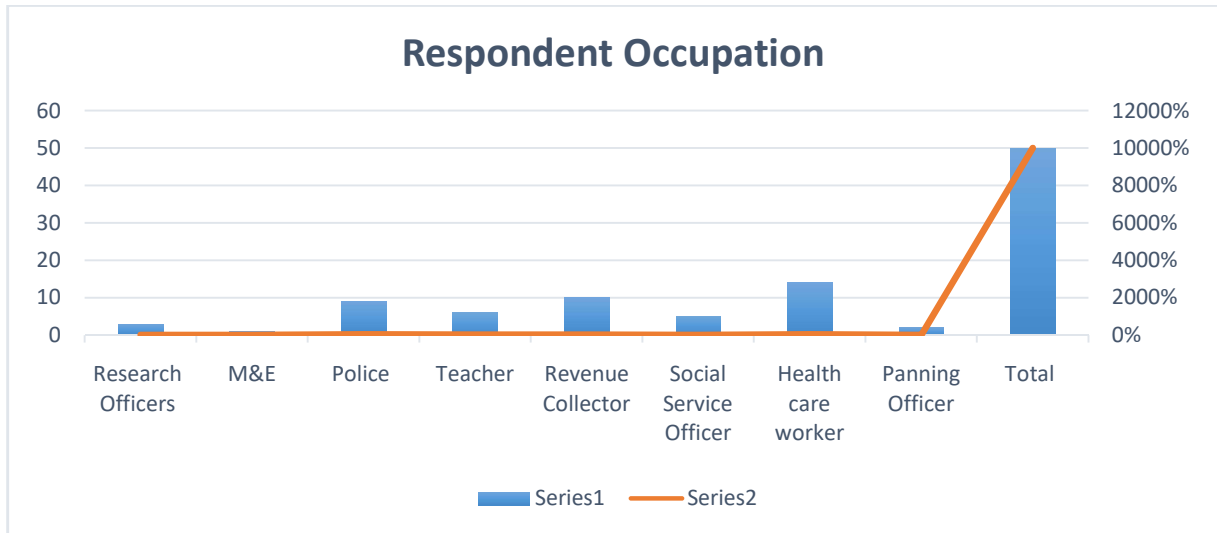
Figure 2: Respondents' occupation
Source, Authors Field research march, 2024

Impact of Motivation on employees in state Institutions in Sierra Leone

From the findings in Table 2 below, 4% of the respondents perceived motivation in Sierra Leone state institution as high, 20% perceived as moderate, 28% Perceived low and 48% perceived to be very low.
This could mean that there is little or no impact of motivation on employee performance in Sierra Leone states institutions.

Table 2: Impact of motivation of Employees in Sierra Leone.

Responses	Frequency N	Percentage
Very high	0	0
High	2	4
Moderate	10	20
Low	14	28
Very Low	24	48
Total	**50**	**100%**

Source, Authors Field research march, 2024

Determinant of employee motivation in State institutions

From figure 3, it shows large proportion 60% of the respondents claimed they are not motivated at their places of work, and 30% said are somewhat satisfied while, 10% said are not motivated. According to this study, it can be concluded that, motivation of employees stands out as a challenge in state institutions.
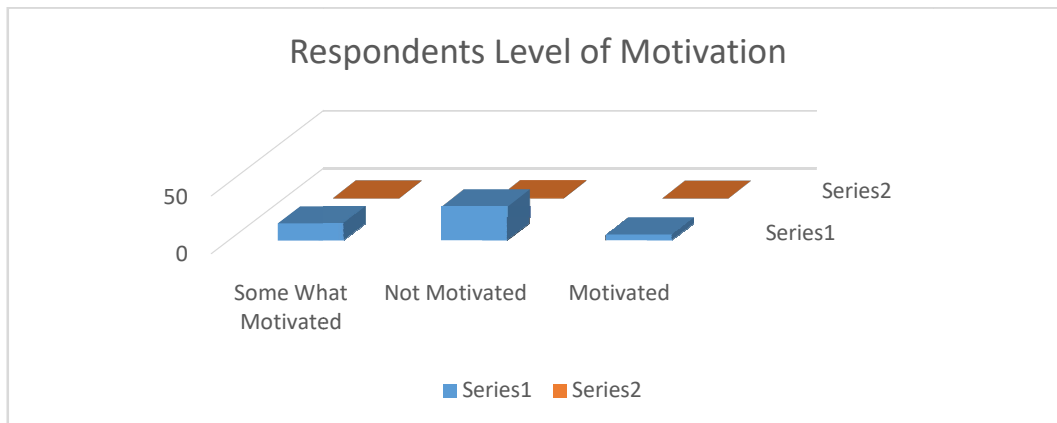
Figure 3: Level of Motivation
Source, Author's Field research March2024

Obstacles in maintaining high levels of motivation among employees in state institutions

According to data from Table 2, 40% of the respondents identified scarce resources as the major challenge, 10% said inflexible hierarchies, 40% said lack of commitment from institutional heads, and 10% claimed bureaucratic structures as the major challenge.

This suggests that scarce resources and a lack of commitment from institutional heads are the most pressing concerns in maintaining high levels of motivation among employees.

Table 3: Obstacles in maintaining motivation among employees.

Responses	Frequency N	Percentage %
Scarce Resources	20	40
Inflexible Hierarchies	5	10
Lack of Commitment from Institutional Heads	20	40
Bureaucratic Structures	5	10
Total	50	100

Source: Authors Field research, March 2024

DISCUSSION

Findings from this study underscore the urgent need for intervention aimed at improving employee motivation within state institutions in Sierra Leone. The significant proportion of dissatisfied employees highlights a pervasive issue that threatens organizational effectiveness and service delivery. Scarce resources and the lack of commitment from institutional heads emerge as primary obstacles indicating systemic challenges that must be addressed at both policy and managerial levels.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION

As this study clarifies the connection between worker motivation and output in Sierra Leone's public institutions, there are numerous directions for future investigation to expand on this knowledge and guide successful interventions. It would be beneficial for researchers in the future to carry out a longitudinal study to monitor how employee motivation and output evolve.

This will shed light on whether motivational techniques are appropriate and what kind of long-term effects they might have on organizational performance.

Furthermore, to comprehend the motivational dynamics and performance outcomes across diverse cultures and contexts, future researchers ought to perform a cross-cultural comparison. Culturally sensitive strategies adapted to particular contexts can be informed by an understanding of the influences that culture has on employee motivation.

CONCLUSION

The results show that there is an urgent need for interventions to improve the motivation of government agency employees in Sierra Leone. Most respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the current motivational environment, which may impact organizational effectiveness and service delivery. Prioritizing employee motivation, Sierra Leone's state institutions can unlock untapped potential, drive performance improvements, and ultimately fulfil their mandate of providing quality public services.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are proffered.

1.   State institutions should introduce motivational schemes like recognition scheme, training opportunities, and career advancement that will inspire and make employees engaged.
2.   Institutions should develop a workplace culture that prioritizes employee well-being, collaboration, and inclusivity. Addressing issues of workload, job security, and work-life balance can boost morale and motivate employees.

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