



Employee Work Motivation in Selected Restaurants in Sara, Iloilo: The Roles of Salary, Work Itself, Responsibility, and Management Support

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Abstract

Employee motivation is a key determinant of organizational performance, particularly in labor-intensive sectors such as the restaurant industry. This descriptive-comparative, cross-sectional survey design examined the level of employee motivation in selected restaurants in Sara, Iloilo, Philippines, focusing on salary, work itself, responsibility, and management support. Using purposive sampling, 100 employees from ten restaurants were surveyed and classified according to selected demographic variables. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis test, were employed in the analysis. Findings revealed that employees were generally highly motivated across all indicators. Older employees reported significantly higher salary motivation, while Employees with higher educational attainment showed significantly higher motivation across all dimensions, although the strength of motivation varied by factor. No significant differences were found when respondents were grouped according to sex, civil status, and monthly income. The findings suggest that equitable compensation and supportive management may help sustain employee motivation in small restaurant settings similar to those in Sara, Iloilo. It is recommended that restaurant managers strengthen fair compensation systems and implement inclusive motivational strategies that consider employees' educational backgrounds to further enhance workforce engagement and organizational outcomes.

Keywords: employee motivation, salary, work itself, responsibility, management support, restaurants, Sara, Iloilo, Philippines



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INTRODUCTION

Employee motivation is a key driver of organizational performance, particularly in labor-intensive industries such as food service and hospitality. In restaurant settings, where service quality depends heavily on direct human interaction, motivated employees tend to demonstrate stronger service orientation, adaptability under pressure, and sustained work engagement. These behaviors contribute to improved customer satisfaction, repeat patronage, and overall organizational success. Motivation is shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including fair compensation, meaningful work, responsibility, and supportive management, all of which contribute to productivity, commitment, and job performance.

The importance of employee motivation is further emphasized by the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that individuals are more motivated when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled (Gagné et al., 2022). This is particularly relevant in hospitality work environments where employees frequently engage in emotional labor and operate under dynamic service conditions. Research shows that when these psychological needs are supported, employees are less likely to experience burnout and turnover, thereby strengthening organizational stability.

In the Philippine context, the food service industry plays a significant role in employment generation and economic development.

Empirical studies have shown that employee motivation positively influences job performance, productivity, and service quality in food service establishments (Garcia & Regala, 2022; Delos Santos, 2023). In Western Visayas, continued growth in the services sector has increased labor demand and intensified competition among establishments for skilled workers (PSA, 2024; PSA RSSO VI, 2025). Consequently, maintaining employee motivation has become essential not only for organizational performance but also for workforce retention.

In local settings such as Sara, Iloilo, restaurants mostly small and medium-sized enterprises operate under conditions characterized by fluctuating customer demand, long working hours, and high-pressure service environments. Despite these challenges, employee motivation remains essential in ensuring service quality and sustaining business operations. In line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth and SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being), promoting positive work conditions and employee well-being is critical in strengthening workforce sustainability in the hospitality sector.

Despite extensive literature on employee motivation, limited empirical studies focus specifically on small-scale restaurant settings in rural Philippine municipalities such as Sara, Iloilo. Moreover, few studies have simultaneously examined salary, work itself, responsibility, and management support within a unified framework while also analyzing differences across multiple demographic variables. This restricts the development of localized and evidence-based human resource strategies tailored to small restaurant operations.

Research Objectives. This study aims to assess the level of employee motivation among restaurant employees in Sara, Iloilo, and examine differences across selected demographic variables.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of employee motivation in terms of salary, work itself, responsibility, and management support when respondents are grouped according to their profile?
2. Are there significant differences in employee motivation when grouped according to demographic variables?

Conceptual Framework. This study examines how respondents' demographic characteristics age, sex, civil status, and monthly income influence employee motivation in terms of salary, work itself, responsibility, and management support. These relationships are grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, and Self-Determination Theory (SDT).

From Maslow's perspective, salary addresses employees' physiological and safety needs, while work itself and responsibility contribute to higher-order needs such as esteem and self-actualization. Management support further strengthens belongingness and esteem by fostering positive interpersonal relationships within the workplace. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory complements this by classifying salary and management support as hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction, while work itself and responsibility function as motivators that enhance job satisfaction, engagement, and personal growth.

Similarly, Self-Determination Theory explains that responsibility enhances autonomy, work itself strengthens competence, and management support promotes relatedness three fundamental psychological needs that sustain intrinsic motivation in the workplace.

These theories collectively suggest that employee motivation results from the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, where financial rewards satisfy basic physiological needs, while meaningful work, responsibility, and supportive management

foster psychological engagement, autonomy, and long-term workplace motivation.

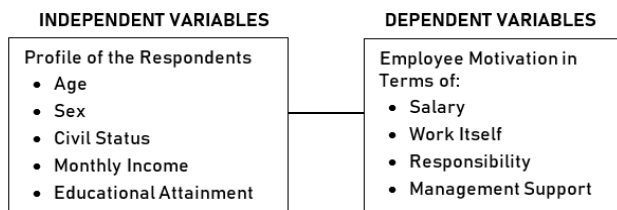


Figure 1
Relationship Between Respondent Profile and Employee Motivation Dimensions

LITERATURE REVIEW

Restaurants and Employee Motivation. Employee motivation plays a critical role in the restaurant industry, where high turnover and workforce instability remain persistent challenges. Empirical studies show that beyond competitive compensation, organizations increasingly implement holistic human resource strategies such as career development opportunities, flexible scheduling, and supportive leadership practices to enhance employee motivation and retention (Gagné et al., 2022; Garrido-Morgado et al., 2024). These findings emphasize that motivation in service industries is shaped by multiple workplace dimensions, including salary, work itself, responsibility, and management support.

The relationship between these dimensions and employee motivation is grounded in established motivational theories. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs explains that salary satisfies employees' physiological and safety needs, while work itself and responsibility address higher-order needs such as esteem and self-actualization. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory further distinguishes salary and management support as hygiene factors that prevent dissatisfaction, whereas work itself and responsibility function as motivators that enhance job satisfaction and engagement. Similarly, Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) emphasizes that motivation is strengthened when the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled—reflected in responsibility, meaningful work, and supportive management.

These theories collectively suggest that employee motivation results from the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, where financial rewards sustain basic needs while meaningful work, responsibility, and supportive management foster long-term psychological engagement.

Empirical evidence supports this integration, showing that employees who experience both fair compensation and enriching work environments demonstrate higher job satisfaction, engagement, and retention (Al-Suraihi et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023). The work environment further plays a crucial role, as factors such as emotional labor, long working hours, and customer-related stress may negatively affect motivation if not properly managed (Gagné et al., 2022). However, supportive leadership practices including clear communication, fair scheduling, and employee recognition help mitigate these challenges and strengthen organizational commitment (Santos & Dela Cruz, 2022; Ahmad et al., 2022). Meta-analytic evidence further confirms that higher job satisfaction is strongly associated with reduced turnover intention, underscoring the importance of integrating motivational and environmental factors (Ersoya, 2024).

Salary in Employee Motivation. Salary remains a fundamental extrinsic determinant of employee motivation, particularly because it directly addresses basic economic needs. Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, financial compensation ensures physiological and safety stability, forming the foundation for higher-level motivation. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory similarly classifies salary as a hygiene factor, indicating that while it does not necessarily create long-term satisfaction, inadequate compensation leads to dissatisfaction and reduced motivation.

Empirical studies in peer-reviewed service industry contexts confirm that fair and competitive compensation significantly influences employee performance and job satisfaction (Al-Suraihi et al., 2021). In addition, transparent and equitable pay structures

enhance perceived organizational fairness, which strengthens motivation and commitment (Garrido-Morgado et al., 2024). Although salary is primarily an extrinsic factor, it indirectly supports intrinsic motivation by reducing financial stress and enabling employees to focus on higher-level job goals.

Work Itself and Responsibility. Work itself and responsibility are key intrinsic motivators that significantly influence employee engagement and job satisfaction. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory identifies these as core motivators that foster achievement, recognition, and personal growth. Similarly, Self-Determination Theory emphasizes that meaningful work enhances competence, while responsibility strengthens autonomy essential for sustaining intrinsic motivation.

Empirical studies demonstrate that employees who perceive their work as meaningful and are given clear responsibilities exhibit higher engagement, resilience, and job satisfaction (Wang et al., 2023; Chen et al., 2022). Furthermore, role clarity and autonomy have been found to encourage proactive behavior and strengthen organizational commitment (Santos & Rivera, 2023). In restaurant environments, where employees directly influence customer experience, meaningful tasks and well-defined responsibilities are essential in promoting accountability, teamwork, and service quality.

Management Support. Management support is a critical determinant of employee motivation, particularly in service-oriented industries. Supportive leadership practices, such as recognition, open communication, and employee development opportunities, enhance morale and engagement (Santos & Dela Cruz, 2022). From a theoretical standpoint, management support functions both as a hygiene factor (Herzberg) and as a mechanism for fulfilling relatedness needs (Self-Determination Theory), thereby strengthening employees' sense of belonging and value within the organization.

Recent peer-reviewed studies confirm that effective management practices positively influence employee trust, organizational commitment, and performance (Ahmad et al., 2022; Lee & Park, 2023). In restaurant settings, where coordination and service quality are essential, strong managerial support contributes to operational efficiency, teamwork, and service consistency. Furthermore, supportive leadership helps reduce workplace stressors and improves employee retention by fostering a positive and stable work environment (Rahman & Karim, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design. This study utilized a descriptive-comparative, cross-sectional survey design to assess the level of employee motivation and examine differences across selected demographic variables. The design enabled the systematic collection of data on employees' perceptions of salary, work itself, responsibility, and management support without manipulating the research setting.

Population and Sampling. The study was conducted in ten selected restaurants in Sara, Iloilo, Philippines, anonymized as R1 to R10 to ensure confidentiality. A total of 100 employees were selected using purposive sampling. The use of purposive sampling may introduce selection bias and limit generalizability beyond the selected restaurants.

Respondents met the following inclusion criteria: (1) currently employed in a restaurant, (2) directly involved in service or operational functions, and (3) with at least three months of continuous employment. This ensured that participants had sufficient experience to evaluate workplace motivation. While purposive sampling allowed the selection of relevant participants, it may introduce sampling bias and limit the generalizability of the findings. Respondents were grouped according to age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, and monthly income.

Instrumentation. Data were gathered using an adopted questionnaire from Montejo et al. (2023), measuring employee motivation across four dimensions: salary, work itself, responsibility, and management support. The instrument consisted of two sections: demographic profile and motivation items rated on a five-point Likert scale as shown in Table 1 (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

A pilot test was conducted to establish reliability, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency. Mean scores were interpreted using established ranges, while standard deviation (SD) was used to assess response variability, where lower SD values indicate more consistent responses and higher values indicate greater dispersion.

Table 1
Motivation Rating Scale with Ranges and Interpretations

Scale	Range	Interpretation
5	4.21 – 5.00	Highly Motivated
4	3.41 – 4.20	Motivated
3	2.61 – 3.40	Moderately Motivated
2	1.81 – 2.60	Less Motivated
1	1.00 – 1.80	Least Motivated

Ethical Considerations. Ethical protocols were strictly observed throughout the study. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants after they were fully informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Participation was strictly voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by collecting no personally identifiable information, and all responses were encoded and analyzed in aggregate form. Data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

Data Analysis. Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to summarize motivation levels. To determine differences across groups, nonparametric tests were applied: the Mann-Whitney U test for two-group comparisons and

the Kruskal-Wallis test for variables with three or more groups. Nonparametric tests were used due to the ordinal nature of Likert-scale data and the non-normal distribution of responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Level of Employee Motivation towards Work among Selected Restaurants in Sara, Iloilo in terms of Salary, Work Itself, Responsibility, and Management Support. Table 2 shows that employees were generally highly motivated across all dimensions, with work itself obtaining the highest mean. This indicates that employees derive strong motivation from the nature of their tasks and daily work experiences.

This finding aligns with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959), which emphasizes that intrinsic factors such as meaningful work and responsibility are key motivators of job satisfaction. It is also supported by Wang et al. (2023) and Chen et al. (2022), who found that meaningful and well-defined work roles significantly enhance employee engagement and resilience in service industries. In restaurant settings in Sara, Iloilo, employees often perform multi-tasking roles, which may increase skill utilization and reinforce intrinsic motivation, consistent with Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) on competence development.

Table 2
Level of employee motivation towards work among selected restaurants in Sara, Iloilo in terms of salary, work itself, responsibility, and management support

Factors	SD	Mean	Interpretations
A. Salary	.651	4.23	Highly Motivated
B. Work Itself	.587	4.42	Highly Motivated
C. Responsibility	.670	4.39	Highly Motivated
D. Management Support	.688	4.39	Highly Motivated

Significant Differences in the Level of Employee Motivation in Terms of Salary. Table 3 reveals no significant differences in salary motivation across sex, civil status, and monthly income. This suggests that perceptions of compensation are relatively uniform among employees.

This finding is consistent with Al-Suraihi et al. (2021), who reported that compensation is a baseline factor influencing motivation across employee groups but does not always vary significantly by demographic characteristics. In addition, Garrido-Morgado et al. (2024) emphasized that standardized pay structures in service industries often lead to similar perceptions of salary fairness among employees.

In the context of Sara, Iloilo, most restaurants are small to medium enterprises with relatively uniform wage systems, which may explain the absence of significant variation across groups.

Table 3
Significant Differences in the Level of Employee Motivation in terms of Salary Motivation when Grouped According to Respondents Profile

Variable	Group	Mean	Z	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	Male	4.40	-0.639	.523	Not Significant
	Female	4.33			
Civil Status	Single	4.28	-0.546	.585	Not Significant
	Married	4.22			
Monthly Income	≤10,000	4.30	-0.823	.411	Not Significant
	≥10,001	4.24			

Significant Differences in the Level of Employee Motivation in Terms of Work Itself. Table 4 shows no significant differences in motivation in terms of work itself across demographic variables. This indicates that employees similarly value the nature of their work regardless of personal characteristics.

This result supports Hackman and Oldham's Job Characteristics Model (1976), which emphasizes that meaningful work design leads to consistent motivational outcomes across individuals. It is also supported by Wang et al. (2023), who found that employees in high-pressure service environments demonstrate strong intrinsic motivation when work is meaningful and skill-enhancing.

In small restaurant settings in Sara, Iloilo, employees typically engage in direct customer service, food preparation, and multitasking roles, which enhance task variety and contribute to achieving uniformly high motivation levels.

Table 4
Significant Differences in the Level of Employee Motivation in terms of Differences in Terms of Work Itself when Grouped According to Respondents Profile

Variable	Group	Mean	Z	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	Male	4.30	-1.689	.091	Not Significant
	Female	4.53			
Civil Status	Single	4.43	-0.067	.947	Not Significant
	Married	4.41			
Monthly Income	≤10,000	4.43	-0.234	.815	Not Significant
	≥10,001	4.41			

Significant Differences in the Level of Employee Motivation in Terms of Responsibility. Table 5 indicates no significant differences in responsibility motivation across demographic groups. This finding aligns with Chen et al. (2022) and Santos and Rivera (2023), who reported that clearly defined responsibilities and role clarity promote consistent levels of motivation across employee groups. According to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, responsibility is a core motivator that enhances job satisfaction regardless of demographic differences.

In local restaurant operations, responsibilities are often shared and task-oriented, which may explain the uniform perception among employees in Sara, Iloilo.

Table 5
Significant Differences in the Level of Employee Motivation in terms of Responsibility when Grouped According to Respondents Profile

Variable	Group	Mean	Z	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	Male	4.34	-0.901	.091	Not Significant
	Female	4.44			
Civil Status	Single	4.46	-1.024	.306	Not Significant
	Married	4.41			
Monthly Income	≤10,000	4.40	-0.500	.617	Not Significant
	≥10,001	4.39			

Significant Differences in the Level of Employee Motivation in Terms of Management Support. Table 6 shows no significant differences in perceived management support across demographic variables. This finding is supported by Ahmad et al. (2022) and Lee and Park (2023), who found that supportive leadership practices such as communication, recognition, and guidance positively influence employee motivation across different employee

profiles. Similarly, Rahman and Karim (2023) emphasized that leadership support strengthens organizational commitment regardless of demographic differences.

In Sara, Iloilo, the close interaction between managers and employees in small-scale restaurants may contribute to a consistent perception of management support across all groups

Table 6
Significant Differences in the Level of Employee Motivation in terms of Management Support when Grouped According to Respondents Profile

Variable	Group	Mean	Z	p-value	Interpretation
Sex	Male	4.32	-1.032	.302	Not Significant
	Female	4.45			
Civil Status	Single	4.44	-0.209	.835	Not Significant
	Married	4.31			
Monthly Income	≤10,000	4.40	-0.918	.359	Not Significant
	≥10,001	4.38			

Significant Differences in Salary Motivation by Age. Table 7 shows a significant difference in salary motivation across age groups ($H(3) = 8.214, p = .042$), with older employees reporting higher motivation. This finding is consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), which suggests that individuals in later life stages place greater emphasis on financial security. It also aligns with ADP (2024), which reported that financial stability becomes increasingly important as employees age due to greater family and economic responsibilities.

In the context of Sara, Iloilo, older employees may have more dependents and financial obligations, explaining their stronger sensitivity to salary-related motivation.

Table 7
Differences in Salary Motivation by Age (Kruskal-Wallis Test)

Variable	H	df	p-value	Interpretation
Age	8.214	3	.042	Significant

Significant Differences in Motivation by Educational Attainment. Table 8 shows significant differences across all motivation

dimensions based on educational attainment. This result is supported by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), which suggest that more educated employees tend to seek higher-level motivators such as achievement, autonomy, and career development. Similarly, Gagné et al. (2022) found that employees with higher education levels demonstrate stronger intrinsic motivation when provided with meaningful work and responsibility.

In Sara, Iloilo, employees with higher educational attainment may have greater expectations for career growth and professional development, leading to higher motivation across all dimensions.

Table 8
Differences in Motivation by Educational Attainment (Kruskal-Wallis Test)

Factor	H	df	p-value	Interpretation
Salary	9.105	3	.028	Significant
Work Itself	10.334	3	.016	Significant
Responsibility	8.776	3	.032	Significant
Management Support	7.998	3	.046	Significant

Conclusions. The study found that employee motivation was generally high across all dimensions, namely salary, work itself, responsibility, and management support. Results further indicated that motivation levels did not significantly differ when respondents were grouped according to sex, civil status, and monthly income. However, variations were observed in salary motivation based on age and educational attainment, while educational attainment also showed differences across other motivation dimensions.

Overall, the findings suggest that employee motivation in restaurant settings is influenced by a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors that operate simultaneously. Work-related aspects such as meaningful tasks, responsibility, and management support were consistently rated highly, indicating their relevance in sustaining motivation across

employee groups. At the same time, differences observed in salary motivation suggest that financial expectations may vary depending on employees' age and educational background.

Limitations of the Study. This study is subject to several limitations. First, the sample size of 100 employees may limit the statistical generalizability of the findings to the broader population of restaurant workers. Second, the use of purposive sampling may introduce selection bias, as respondents were chosen based on specific inclusion criteria rather than random selection. Third, the study was conducted only in selected restaurants in Sara, Iloilo; thus, findings may not be applicable to urban or highly industrialized settings. Lastly, the reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias, as participants may have provided socially desirable answers or subjective interpretations of the survey items.

Recommendations. In light of the findings, several recommendations are proposed.

Restaurant managers are encouraged to develop differentiated motivational and compensation strategies that consider employees' age and educational attainment, as variations were observed in salary motivation across these groups. Tailored compensation structures and incentive schemes may help address differing financial needs and expectations among employees.

Since educational attainment was found to influence motivation in multiple dimensions, management may implement targeted training and development programs that align employees' competencies with job responsibilities. Such initiatives may enhance employee engagement, performance, and job satisfaction.

Strengthening management support systems is also recommended. Practices such as consistent communication, recognition programs, and supportive supervision may help sustain high levels of employee motivation across all demographic groups.

Employees are likewise encouraged to engage in continuous professional development, including skills training and certification programs, to improve career advancement opportunities and job performance.

Future researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of the study by including larger samples and multiple geographic locations to enhance generalizability. It is also recommended that future studies explore additional variables such as organizational culture, leadership styles, and work-life balance to provide a more comprehensive understanding of employee motivation in the hospitality industry.

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Data availability statement. All data supporting the findings of this study are included within the manuscript and its supplementary materials.

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