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Intrinsic motivation in job performance and talent retention of employees

Motivación intrínseca en el desempeño laboral y retención de talento de los trabajadores

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze the impact of intrinsic motivation on job performance and talent retention in a retail services company in Peru. This sector is characterized by rotating schedules, rigid operational structures, lack of training, and low financial incentives. The main objective is to identify the impact of intrinsic motivation on job performance and retention. The study adopts an applied quantitative approach, with a non-experimental, cross-sectional, and correlational-causal design. It worked with a population of 120 employees and a sample of 92 workers. The descriptive results showed an average of 40.52 for motivation, 45.33 for talent retention, and 65.32 for job performance, indicating that intrinsic motivation and retention are at moderate levels, while job performance is consistently high. Multiple regression analysis showed that intrinsic motivation has a significant impact (Spearman's Rho of 0.735 for job performance and 0.733 for talent retention), with strong positive correlations. The significance in both cases was less than 0.05, accepting the alternative hypothesis. It is concluded that a work environment that promotes intrinsic motivation not only optimizes individual performance but is also a key factor in talent retention. Therefore, the importance of implementing policies that promote a positive work climate and intrinsic satisfaction is highlighted.

Keywords: intrinsic motivation, performance, retention.

Resumen

El propósito de esta investigación es analizar la incidencia de la motivación intrínseca en el desempeño laboral y la retención de talento en una empresa de servicios del sector retail en Perú. Este sector se caracteriza por manejar horarios rotativos, estructuras operativas rígidas, falta de capacitaciones e incentivos económicos bajos. El objetivo principal es identificar la incidencia de la motivación intrínseca en el desempeño laboral y la retención. El estudio adopta un enfoque cuantitativo de tipo aplicado, con un diseño no experimental, transeccional y correlacional-causal. Se trabajó con una población de 120 colaboradores y una muestra de 92 trabajadores. Los resultados descriptivos mostraron una media de 40.52 para la motivación, 45.33 para la retención de talento y 65.32 para el desempeño laboral, lo que indica que la motivación intrínseca y la retención se encuentran en niveles moderados, mientras que el desempeño laboral es consistentemente elevado. El análisis de regresión múltiple mostró que la motivación intrínseca tiene un impacto significativo (Rho de Spearman de 0.735 para el desempeño laboral y 0.733 para la retención de talento), con correlaciones positivas y fuertes. La significancia en ambos casos fue menor a 0.05, aceptándose la hipótesis alterna. Se concluye que un entorno laboral que

promueva la motivación intrínseca no solo optimiza el rendimiento individual, sino que también constituye un factor clave para la permanencia del talento. Por ello, se destaca la importancia de implementar políticas que promuevan un clima laboral positivo y la satisfacción intrínseca.

Palabras clave: motivación intrínseca, desempeño, retención.

Introduction

Intrinsic motivation in job performance and talent retention is addressed with an academic tone, grounded in evidence, and follows a formal structure; it prioritizes clarity and the use of objective arguments to support its relevance in the organizational context. Interest in motivation has been growing in both academic and organizational spheres in response to the desire to understand and explain human behavior. In this regard, scientific research has yielded significant findings, particularly concerning intrinsic motivation. This form of motivation is continuously revitalized, as the human factor remains pivotal for the success or failure of organizations. A workforce that is fully engaged in their work, requiring neither extraordinary incentives nor pressure to fulfill their tasks, translates into increased productivity, job satisfaction, and achievement of objectives (Duran, 2024).

However, intrinsic motivation has yet to be effectively and systematically integrated into human resource management strategies. This gap in practical application contrasts sharply with the interest of researchers in the field. Intrinsic motivation tends to enhance work performance and is a crucial factor for explaining an individual's intention to remain within the organization. Over time, it has become evident that while the organizational environment positively influences intrinsic motivation, there are also factors that exert a negative effect (Estela-Estela et al., 2025).

In this regard, human capital has consolidated itself as the primary strategic asset in the dynamic global business environment, particularly in the service and retail sectors where direct customer interaction is critical (Rollnik et al., 2023). In this context, intrinsic motivation emerges as an essential psychological construct that transcends external rewards to drive organizational behavior (Chimenti et al., 2023). This type of motivation, rooted in enjoyment of activities, autonomy, a sense of competence, and a sense of purpose, is a key driver of high levels of job performance. Simultaneously, an organization’s ability to retain its most valuable employees—known as talent retention—serves as an important indicator of its organizational health and competitive sustainability, fundamental for minimizing costs associated with employee turnover (Lintang & Simamora, 2023).

Retail companies in Peru, despite being innovative and seeking new dynamic markets, also aim to optimize production, distribution, and labor costs. One of the most common issues is the high turnover of staff in operational roles, often associated with rotating shifts and lack of training in customer service (Moreno et al., 2022). Consequently, many workers report dissatisfaction with their jobs, fulfilling their roles solely due to economic necessity, which reveals a low level of commitment and a tendency for short-term employment (Thomas et al., 2025). Motivation is a critical factor for creating a sense of commitment among employees; this dynamic fosters loyalty to the company and thus enhances workplace efficiency. Accordingly, organizations must implement a paradigm shift that promotes motivation and the behavior of their members (Subedi et al., 2024).

Analyzing this context reveals limitations in the research integrating intrinsic motivation, job performance, and talent retention in a sector characterized by work pressure and high turnover rates. Nonetheless, many managers have identified challenges linked to performance levels, commitment, and efficiency, attributing these issues to low motivation, lack of identification, and inadequate compensation. While the literature indicates that intrinsic motivation is a significant factor in promoting favorable performance and retaining human potential, a knowledge gap exists regarding the integration of these variables.

The relevance of this study lies in establishing the degree of impact among these factors. It provides a solid empirical foundation that allows human resource management to develop intervention strategies aimed not only at optimizing operational efficiency but also at stabilizing and strengthening the workforce within establishments. This ultimately contributes directly to reducing operational expenses and increasing competitiveness in the local service sector.

In light of the above, the objective of this study is to identify the impact of intrinsic motivation on job performance and talent retention among employees of a service company.

Methodology

The study employed a quantitative approach and was classified as applied research, as it connects existing theories with a specific context (service company) and is oriented toward solving practical problems through a proposed solution. The methodological framework adopted was hypothetical-deductive. The design was

non-experimental, cross-sectional, and correlational-causal in nature, describing the relationship between the variables at a given time.

The population comprised 120 workers distributed across 12 sales sections within a service company. For the study, a sample of 92 workers was calculated, utilizing a confidence level of 95% (z = 1.96) and a margin of error of 5%. A probabilistic random sampling method was employed, ensuring that each member of the population had an equal chance of being selected.

The data collection technique involved surveys, and the instrument used was a questionnaire comprising three scales with 12, 16, and 12 items, respectively, corresponding to the variables of the study. The instruments were validated by three expert judges, yielding reliability indices of 0.950 for motivation, 0.930 for job performance, and 0.870 for talent retention, which are considered very high. Prior to implementation, informed consent was obtained from participants, ensuring confidentiality and exclusive use of the information for research purposes. Additionally, approval was secured from the Ethics Committee of César Vallejo University (Protocol No. 123-456-789).

The collected data were initially organized in Microsoft Excel v.365 for subsequent analysis using SPSS v.28 statistical software. The statistical analysis commenced with descriptive statistics, calculating frequencies and levels of the variables. Subsequently, a normality test was conducted to determine whether the data exhibited a normal distribution. To test the hypotheses, multiple logistic regression was employed, along with analyses of correlations, variance, ANOVA, and standardized coefficients. The study adheres to all ethical principles of scientific research.

Results and discussion

The results obtained provide insights into the behavior of the primary variables of the study and evaluate the impact of intrinsic motivation on job performance and talent retention within the analyzed company. Initially, descriptive analyses are presented, illustrating the reported levels by employees for each variable. Subsequently, the correlations and regression models that identify the strength and direction of the relationships between the evaluated constructs are discussed. This organization facilitates a clear and progressive interpretation of the findings, highlighting both general trends and statistically significant effects identified in the research.

Table 1

Descriptive analyses of variables

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Intrinsic motivation	92	18	60	40.52	11.733
Job performance	92	36	80	65.32	11.081
Talent retention	92	27	60	45.33	8.264

Note: The results reflect the mean values and their deviations, SPSS version 28.

The intrinsic motivation variable recorded a mean of 40.52, with a standard deviation (SD) of 11.73, while talent retention yielded a mean of 45.33 (SD = 8.26). Job performance exhibited a mean of 65.32 (SD = 11.08). These data indicate that, although intrinsic motivation and retention levels are moderate within the group, employees consistently demonstrate a high level of job performance.

Table 2

Correlation between intrinsic motivation, job performance, and talent retention

	Intrinsic motivation	Job performance	Talent retention
Spearman's Rho			
Intrinsic motivation	1	0.735**	0.733**
Job performance	0.735**	1	0.701**
Talent retention	0.733**	0.701**	1

	Intrinsic motivation	Job performance	Talent retention
Sig. (two-tailed)			
Intrinsic motivation	.	0.000	0.000
Job performance	0.000	.	0.000
Talent retention	0.000	0.000	.
N	92	92	92

*Note: **p < .01 (two-tailed). The results indicate the correlation indices, SPSS version 28.*

The results presented in the table demonstrate a strong positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and job performance, with a coefficient of 0.735. Similarly, a strong positive correlation exists between intrinsic motivation and talent retention, with a coefficient of 0.733. These findings suggest that the internal factors motivating employees directly influence the quality and efficiency of their performance. Thus, fostering intrinsic motivation emerges as an effective strategy for enhancing job performance within the organizational context.

Table 3

Multiple regression analysis of variables

Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	Standard error of estimate
1	0.73a4	0.538	0.533	8.018
2	0.760b	0.577	0.567	7.717

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), Talent Retention. b. Predictors: (Constant), Talent Retention, Job Performance. The results indicate the variability index, SPSS version 28.

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine how the independent variables of job performance and talent retention interact in their influence on employees' intrinsic motivation. This analysis facilitates the identification of the magnitude and relevance of the relationship between these variables as well as the quantification of their collective impact on intrinsic motivation.

- **Model 1:** The multiple correlation (R) is 0.734, indicating a strong relationship between talent retention and intrinsic motivation. The R^2 value is 0.538, which suggests that 53.8% of the variability in intrinsic motivation is explained by talent retention. The standard error of estimation is 8.018, reflecting the average deviation of the model's predictions from the observed values.
- **Model 2:** When job performance is included as a predictor, the multiple correlation increases to 0.760, indicating a stronger relationship with intrinsic motivation. The R^2 value rises to 0.577, signifying that the model explains 57.7% of the variability, enhancing the explanation compared to the first model. The standard error decreases to 7.717, indicating a better fit for the model.

Table 4

Model comparison – ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	6741.201	1	6741.201	104.862	0.000b
	Residual	5785.756	90	64.286		
	Total	12526.957	91			
2	Regression	7226.908	2	3613.454	60.678	0.000c

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Residual	5300.049	89	59.551		
	Total	12526.957	91			

Note: a. Dependent variable: Intrinsic Motivation. b. Predictors: (Constant), Talent Retention. c. Predictors: (Constant), Talent Retention, Job Performance. The results indicate the logistic regression analysis, SPSS version 28.

- **Model 1:** The regression with talent retention is statistically significant ($F = 104.862$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that this predictor explains a significant portion of the variability in intrinsic motivation.
- **Model 2:** The regression including both talent retention and job performance is also significant ($F = 60.678$, $p < 0.001$). Although the F value is lower, this is attributable to the division of the sum of squares among two predictors, yet it remains a valid and explanatory model.

Table 5

Model comparison – Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-6.687	4.685		-1.427	0.157
	Talent Retention	1.042	0.102	0.734	10.240	0.000
2	(Constant)	-12.175	4.902		-2.484	0.015
	Talent Retention	0.611	0.180	0.430	3.395	0.001
	Job Performance	0.383	0.134	0.362	2.856	0.005

Note: a. Dependent variable: Intrinsic Motivation. The results indicate standardized coefficients, SPSS version 28.

- **Model 1:** The coefficient for talent retention is 1.042, with a t-value of 10.240 and $p < 0.001$, indicating a positive and highly significant effect on intrinsic motivation. The constant is not statistically significant ($p = 0.157$).
- **Model 2:** Talent retention retains a positive coefficient (0.611) that is significant ($p = 0.001$), although lower than in Model 1 due to the inclusion of job performance. Job performance exhibits a positive and significant coefficient (0.383, $p = 0.005$), indicating it also positively influences intrinsic motivation. The constant is significant ($p = 0.015$), suggesting that when predictors are at zero, intrinsic motivation trends toward a negative value in the adjusted model.

Consequently, Model 2 offers the best explanation for intrinsic motivation as it includes both job performance and talent retention, achieving a higher explanatory percentage (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.567$). This indicates that both factors collectively have a significant influence on intrinsic motivation.

The favorable and substantial relationship between these variables indicates that outstanding performance and effective talent retention are critical elements that enhance employees' intrinsic motivation. Thus, it is essential to consider both aspects to create a work environment that fosters commitment and satisfaction among workers.

Based on these results, this research aimed to evaluate the impact of intrinsic motivation on job performance and talent retention within a service company. The primary finding is that intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant impact on both variables, with robust correlations ($rs > 0.73$), thereby validating the study's general hypothesis. This central conclusion aligns with the concepts put forth by Chauhan (2023), who argues that satisfying inherent psychological needs (autonomy, competence, and affiliation) drives sustained high-quality behavior. The significance of this intrinsic factor is corroborated by global reports, such as that of Stor (2024), which emphasizes the necessity of prioritizing motivational factors to drive competitiveness and productivity, confirming that commitment arises from the inherent value of tasks rather than solely from external rewards.

Regarding talent retention, our results (strong incidence of intrinsic motivation) are supported by international literature, such as a study conducted in Malaysia, which identified perceived joy in work (an intrinsic factor) as crucial for employee retention. Evidence from Ibrahimi et al. (2024) also highlights the value that workers place on growth opportunities offered by the company. In the local context, the impact of job performance on intrinsic motivation (β = 0.383) and talent retention (β = 0.611) suggests a critical feedback relationship: success at work reinforces a sense of competence and personal growth, which, in turn, solidifies internal motivation. This is consistent with the definition proposed by Ulate (2020) of the "extra product" of the employee, understood as the manifestation of intrinsic motivation oriented toward excellence and, consequently, toward enhancing the quality and effectiveness of performance.

The results from the multiple regression analysis are particularly notable as they reveal that job performance and talent retention collectively explain 57.7% of the variability in intrinsic motivation. This implies that talent management in Peruvian retail should transition from a purely transactional (extrinsic) focus to one that actively fosters autonomy, competence, and a sense of purpose.

Although the descriptive level of job performance was high, the moderate levels of intrinsic motivation suggest that this performance may not be sustainable over the long term without strategies to reinforce internal commitment. Therefore, implementing a transparent and fair evaluation system, as promoted by Bernard et al. (2025), becomes essential—not only to measure performance but also to use feedback to nurture employees' growth needs and perceptions of fairness, both of which are crucial to counteract the reported turnover issues and lack of commitment among service managers.

Despite the robust findings obtained, it is essential to recognize the inherent limitations of this study. First, the research was based on a cross-sectional non-experimental design, which establishes incidence and correlation relationships but does not allow for definitive causal relationships between the variables. Second, the use of self-report questionnaires may introduce social desirability bias, as participants could have provided more favorable responses. Lastly, the study focused on a specific sample from a single hypermarket in Lima, which restricts the ability to generalize the results to other sectors or the broader group of service companies in Peru.

Overall, this research not only reaffirms the importance of intrinsic motivation but also establishes it as a fundamental element for comprehensive talent management in the retail sector. The principal contribution of the study lies in the empirical and predictive validation of a model in which individual-originated motivation explains more than half of the variance in strategic metrics related to performance and talent retention. The relevance of this finding stems from the high correlation and predictive power, compelling organizational leaders to redirect their human resources policies, shifting from a model based on control and external rewards to one focused on empowerment, fostering autonomy, and instilling a sense of purpose. This contribution represents a significant advancement in the field by providing robust and contextualized data that can facilitate the development of more effective and sustainable management strategies.

Conclusions

This study concludes that intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant impact on job performance and talent retention within the service company analyzed. A work environment that fosters autonomy, a sense of competence, and purpose not only enhances individual performance but also serves as a key factor for talent retention, thereby reducing costs associated with high employee turnover.

The findings underscore the necessity for retail companies in Peru to implement human resource management policies and practices that promote a positive work climate and the intrinsic satisfaction of their employees. This includes, among other aspects, providing professional development opportunities, recognizing achievements, encouraging participation in decision-making, and designing jobs that are both challenging and meaningful.

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