

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Work motivation and its influence on employee performance at the Municipal Slaughter Center of Portoviejo. Legal implications

Motivación laboral y su incidencia en el desempeño de los trabajadores del Centro de Faenamiento Municipal de Portoviejo. Implicaciones jurídicas

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Abstract Work motivation is a key determinant of institutional efficiency and the achievement of organizational objectives. This study analyzed work motivation and its influence on the performance of employees at the Municipal Slaughterhouse of Portoviejo. A quantitative, descriptive-correlational, cross-sectional design was applied to a census population of 29 operational employees. Data were collected using a validated 21-item questionnaire assessing extrinsic, intrinsic, and power motivation, together with nine items measuring work performance. The data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27, and associations between variables were examined using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient ($p < 0.05$). The results showed that 72.41% of employees exhibited a moderate level of work motivation, a pattern also observed for extrinsic (79.30%), intrinsic (65.52%), and power motivation (55.17%). Regarding work performance, 51.72% demonstrated a moderate level, while 44.83% achieved a high level. A positive and statistically significant correlation was found between overall work motivation and performance ($p = 0.672$; $p < 0.001$), as well as for extrinsic ($p = 0.477$), intrinsic ($p = 0.640$), and power motivation ($p = 0.693$). These findings highlight the importance of strengthening autonomy, recognition, and employee participation to improve job performance.

Keywords work motivation, job performance, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, public sector.

Resumen La motivación laboral constituye un factor clave para la eficiencia institucional y el cumplimiento de los objetivos organizacionales. Este estudio analizó la motivación laboral y su influencia en el desempeño de los trabajadores del Centro de Faenamiento Municipal de Portoviejo. Se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo, con diseño descriptivo-correlacional y corte transversal, aplicado a una población censal de 29 trabajadores operativos. La información se recopiló mediante un cuestionario validado de 21 ítems que evaluó las dimensiones de motivación extrínseca, intrínseca y de poder, además de nueve ítems destinados a medir el desempeño laboral. Los datos se procesaron mediante IBM SPSS Statistics versión 27, y la relación entre las variables se examinó utilizando el coeficiente de correlación de Spearman ($p < 0,05$). Los resultados mostraron que el 72,41 % de los trabajadores presentó un nivel medio de motivación laboral, patrón observado también en la motivación extrínseca (79,30 %), intrínseca (65,52 %) y de poder (55,17 %). Respecto al desempeño, el 51,72 % alcanzó un nivel medio y el 44,83 % un nivel alto. Se identificó una correlación positiva y significativa entre motivación y desempeño ($p = 0,672$, $p < 0,001$), evidenciando que mayores niveles de motivación favorecen un mejor desempeño laboral y fortalecen la eficiencia organizacional.

Palabras clave motivación laboral, desempeño laboral, motivación intrínseca, motivación extrínseca, sector público.

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Introduction

Work motivation constitutes a fundamental element of human resource management, as it directly influences productivity, institutional efficiency, and the quality of organizational outcomes. The International Labour Organization (2020) maintains that motivated employees make a significant contribution to the continuous improvement of organizational processes, thereby enhancing institutional competitiveness and sustainability. In this context, organizational theory has progressively evolved toward a people-centered approach, recognizing human capital as the most valuable strategic resource for achieving institutional objectives (Quispe et al., 2023). From a legal perspective, such recognition is grounded in the State's legal obligation to guarantee decent, equitable, and efficient working conditions within the public sector, in accordance with the principles governing the right to work and the legal standards applicable to public administration. Consequently, within public institutions, inadequate employee motivation may result in diminished organizational commitment, lower quality public service delivery, and the emergence of behaviors that undermine administrative efficiency and the effective fulfillment of public purposes (Álvarez & Sánchez, 2022).

From a conceptual perspective, motivation is defined as the “set of internal or external factors that partially determine an individual's actions” (Real Academia Española, 2024). Within the context of labor law and organizational studies, motivation may be understood as a dynamic process derived from both intrinsic and extrinsic factors that initiate, direct, and sustain work-related behavior, determining its direction, intensity, persistence, and level of commitment (Vo et al., 2022). Accordingly, motivation extends beyond a merely emotional state and becomes a determining factor in the effective performance of employment obligations, organizational commitment, productivity, and job satisfaction within the workplace.

Within this framework, work motivation is recognized as a determining factor of employee performance and overall well-being, and its absence may produce adverse consequences for both workers and organizations, negatively affecting institutional efficiency and the achievement of organizational objectives in both the public and private sectors (Andrade et al., 2021). Likewise, job performance is understood as a continuous, systematic, and structured process aimed at assessing and strengthening employees' competencies, behaviors, and work-related outcomes, while also incorporating variables such as organizational commitment, professional responsibility, and attendance. These elements make it possible to evaluate the degree of compliance with the duties inherent to a given position, as well as the overall effectiveness and efficiency of organizational management (Ruiz Corea et al., 2021).

Several international studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between work motivation and employee performance. In Mexico, Ruiz et al. (2023) identified a direct correlation between both variables within the healthcare sector, while in Colombia, Almansa and Calvo (2022) found that 65% of employees in the textile industry reported high levels of motivation associated with improved job performance. Likewise, in Peru, Guido et al. (2024) demonstrated a positive, although moderate, relationship between work motivation and job performance ($Rho = 0.812$). Within the Ecuadorian context, Ponce and Gómez (2021) concluded that the organizational climate explains approximately 91% of job performance, highlighting the influence of motivational workplace conditions on employee productivity.

Consistent with these findings, at the local level, the Portoviejo Municipal Slaughterhouse, a public institution responsible for the slaughter, processing, and preservation of meat products in accordance with applicable technical and sanitary regulations, plays a strategic role in ensuring food safety and supporting the local economy of the Province of Manabí (GAD Portoviejo, 2018). Nevertheless, recent studies have identified deficiencies related to infrastructure, maintenance, waste management, and environmental conditions (Delgado et al., 2023), factors that may adversely affect the working environment and, consequently, employee performance.

Despite its operational and social significance, no previous studies have systematically examined the relationship between work motivation and employee performance within the Portoviejo Municipal Slaughterhouse. This gap in the scientific literature limits the development of evidence-based strategies aimed at strengthening human resource management and improving institutional efficiency within the public sector.

From a legal perspective, work motivation may also be understood as an element intrinsically linked to the fundamental right to work under dignified conditions, as recognized by the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (Republic of Ecuador, 2008), which establishes work as both a fundamental right and a social duty, while guaranteeing respect for workers' dignity and their entitlement to a safe, fair, and adequate working environment. Likewise, within the framework governing public administration, the Organic Law of the Public Service (National Assembly of Ecuador, 2010) provides that human resource management must be directed toward the comprehensive development of public servants and the continuous improvement of institutional performance. Accordingly, factors such as work motivation, professional recognition, and employee participation extend beyond their organizational implications, contributing directly to the effective implementation of the legal principles

governing labor protection, public service excellence, institutional efficiency, and good public administration.

In this context, the present study aims to analyze work motivation and its influence on the job performance of employees at the Portoviejo Municipal Slaughterhouse, providing empirical evidence that contributes to strengthening local public administration and promoting the continuous improvement of organizational processes. Furthermore, the study seeks to generate scientific evidence that supports the design of human resource management strategies consistent with the principles of efficiency, effectiveness, and the protection of labor rights within the public sector.

Methodology

This research employed a descriptive-correlational design with a quantitative, cross-sectional approach aimed at describing the levels of work motivation and job performance among employees of the Portoviejo Municipal Slaughterhouse, as well as examining the relationship between these variables at a specific point in time. The study was conducted at the facilities of the Portoviejo Municipal Slaughterhouse, located in the canton of Portoviejo, Province of Manabí, Ecuador, during the period from June to November 2025.

The study population comprised the entire operational and administrative workforce of the institution, consisting of 29 active employees during the study period, including 23 slaughterhouse operators and 6 administrative staff members. Given the limited size of the target population, a census sampling strategy was adopted, thereby including all eligible employees and eliminating the need for probabilistic sampling procedures.

Eligibility criteria were established to ensure the reliability and relevance of the collected information. Employees with a minimum of six months of continuous service who voluntarily agreed to participate by providing informed consent were included in the study. Conversely, employees on extended leave, those absent during the data collection period, or individuals performing temporary duties or functions external to the institution were excluded from participation.

For data collection, the survey technique was employed through a structured questionnaire consisting of 21 items. The variables work motivation and job performance were assessed using two instruments previously validated by Espinoza (2024) among employees of a Peruvian municipal government. Responses were recorded using a five-point Likert scale ranging from never to always. The work motivation variable comprised three dimensions: extrinsic motivation (5 items), intrinsic motivation (5 items), and power motivation (2 items). The job performance variable consisted of 9 items. Both instruments were administered in their original validated versions without any modifications.

The collected data were processed and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 27. To determine the relationship between work motivation and job performance, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) was applied, adopting a statistical significance level of $p < 0.05$.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and no personally identifiable information was collected from the participants. The information obtained was used exclusively for academic and scientific purposes, ensuring full respect for the dignity, privacy, and fundamental rights of the participants throughout the research process. The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles governing research involving human participants, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and respect for personal autonomy.

Results and discussion

Two previously validated questionnaires comprising a total of 21 items were administered to examine the relationship between work motivation and job performance among employees of the Portoviejo Municipal Slaughterhouse. The findings revealed that 72.41% of the respondents exhibited a moderate level of work motivation, whereas 27.59% demonstrated a high level of motivation. No cases of low work motivation were identified among the participants (Figure 1).

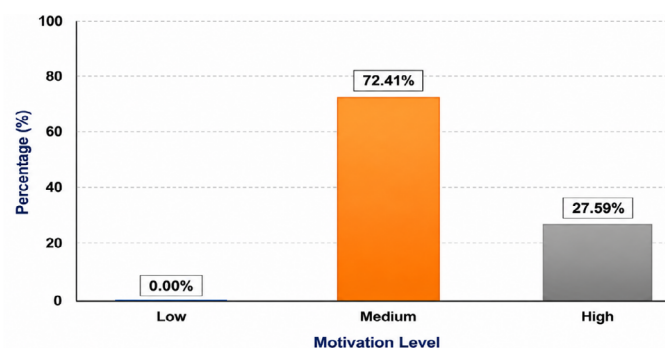


Figure 1. Work Motivation Level among Employees of the Municipal Slaughterhouse of Portoviejo

Regarding the dimensions of work motivation, extrinsic motivation showed the highest concentration at the moderate level (79.30%), followed by the high level (20.70%). Intrinsic motivation also predominated at the moderate level (65.52%), while 31.03% of participants reached a high level and 3.45% a low level. In contrast, power motivation exhibited a more heterogeneous distribution, with 55.17% at the moderate level, 27.59% at the high level, and 17.24% at the low level (Figure 2).

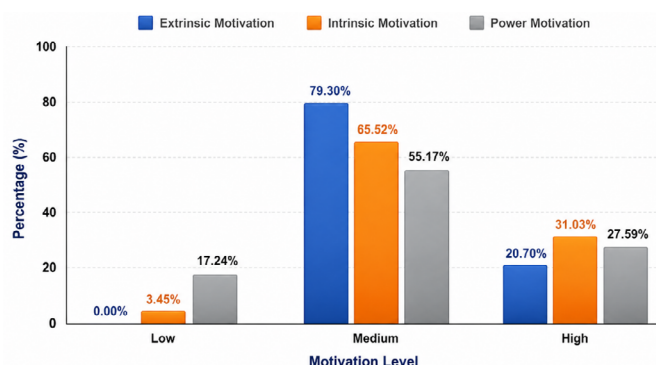


Figure 2. Levels of Work Motivation Dimensions among Employees of the Municipal Slaughterhouse of Portoviejo.

Regarding job performance, 51.72% of the employees demonstrated a moderate level of performance, 44.83% achieved a high level, and only 3.45% exhibited a low level (Figure 3).

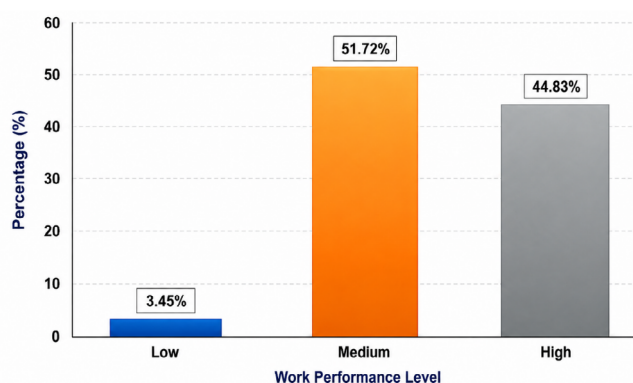


Figure 3. Distribution of Work Performance Levels among Employees of the Municipal Slaughterhouse of Portoviejo

Finally, Spearman's rank correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant association between overall work motivation and work performance ($\rho = 0.672$, $p < 0.001$). At the dimensional level, all motivation components exhibited positive and significant correlations with work performance, including extrinsic motivation ($\rho = 0.477$, $p = 0.009$), intrinsic motivation ($\rho = 0.640$, $p < 0.001$), and power motivation ($\rho = 0.693$, $p < 0.001$). Overall, these findings indicate that higher levels of motivation across all dimensions are associated with better work performance.

Work motivation constitutes a fundamental determinant of employee performance in public institutions, as it directly influences the achievement of organizational objectives, operational efficiency, and the quality of the work environment (Álvarez & Sánchez, 2022). Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that motivated employees exhibit higher productivity, greater organizational commitment, and stronger contributions

to institutional effectiveness (Ruiz et al., 2023). Within this context, the present study examined the relationship between work motivation and job performance among employees of the Municipal Slaughterhouse of Portoviejo, providing empirical evidence to support improvements in local public administration and human resource management.

Table 1. Spearman's Correlation between Work Motivation (Overall and Dimensions) and Work Performance

Dimension / Variable	Correlation with Work Performance (ρ)	p-value
Overall Work Motivation	0.672	< 0.001
Extrinsic Motivation	0.477	0.009
Intrinsic Motivation	0.640	< 0.001
Power Motivation	0.693	< 0.001

From the perspective of public and labor law, these findings are particularly relevant because the performance of public employees depends not only on organizational factors but also on compliance with the legal principles governing public service in Ecuador. Work motivation may therefore be understood as an essential element in guaranteeing the right to decent work and promoting the effectiveness of public administration, in accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (Republic of Ecuador, 2008), which recognizes the right of workers to dignified employment, equitable working conditions, and respect for human dignity. Likewise, the Organic Law on Public Service (National Assembly of Ecuador, 2010) establishes that human talent management in the public sector should promote employees' comprehensive development while enhancing institutional efficiency. Consequently, motivation, recognition, and professional development should be regarded not only as managerial practices but also as legal obligations that contribute to improving the quality, transparency, and effectiveness of public services.

The findings revealed predominantly favorable levels of work motivation, with 72.41% of employees exhibiting a moderate level of motivation and 27.59% demonstrating a high level, while no participants reported low motivation. A similar pattern was observed across all motivational dimensions, each characterized by a predominance of moderate levels. These results suggest a relatively stable organizational environment, however, they also indicate the absence of sufficient organizational drivers capable of fostering exceptionally high levels of employee motivation. Previous research has shown that such variations may be explained by both intrinsic

sic factors, including needs for achievement, affiliation, and power, as well as extrinsic factors such as supervision, career advancement opportunities, compensation, and recognition (García et al., 2017).

Comparison with previous studies provides additional context for these findings. Zapata et al. (2023) reported a predominance of high work motivation (77%), a result that may reflect work environments characterized by stronger incentive systems and more effective recognition practices. Conversely, Leon et al. (2023) found that 61.64% of employees exhibited low motivation, suggesting less favorable working conditions and weaker organizational climates. In comparison, the Municipal Slaughterhouse of Portoviejo appears to occupy an intermediate position, where organizational conditions are sufficient to sustain acceptable operational performance but remain insufficient to stimulate consistently high levels of motivation. Furthermore, the limited variability observed across the motivational dimensions, all of which remained concentrated at the moderate level, reinforces this interpretation by indicating that no single motivational component is sufficiently developed to substantially enhance employees' overall motivational profile.

Regarding work performance, 51.72% of the employees demonstrated a moderate level of performance, 44.83% achieved a high level, and only 3.45% exhibited a low level. Once again, these findings position the Municipal Slaughterhouse of Portoviejo between the two extremes reported in previous research. On the one hand, they differ from the results reported by Zapata et al. (2023), who found that 88% of employees achieved a high level of performance, suggesting particularly favorable working conditions. On the other hand, they contrast with the findings of Ruiz Corea et al. (2021), who reported a critical scenario characterized by a predominance of low performance (50%). Therefore, the intermediate position observed in the present study suggests that, although the organization possesses structural and managerial conditions that support acceptable employee performance, there remains considerable room for improvement to achieve higher standards of organizational effectiveness.

Finally, the correlation analysis confirmed a positive and statistically significant relationship between work motivation and work performance ($\rho = 0.672$, $p < 0.001$), consistent with previous studies reporting similarly strong associations, including those by Paredes et al. (2023), Zapata et al. (2023), Guido-Jara et al. (2024), and Ruiz Corea et al. (2021). These findings reinforce the evidence that work motivation represents a robust predictor of employee performance across different organizational settings.

The dimensional analysis further supports this conclusion. Intrinsic motivation exhibited a strong positive correlation with work performance ($\rho = 0.640$, $p <$

0.001), closely aligning with the coefficients reported by Zapata et al. (2023) ($\rho = 0.713$) and Ruiz Corea et al. (2021) ($\rho = 0.752$). Extrinsic motivation demonstrated a moderate but statistically significant association ($\rho = 0.477$, $p = 0.009$), which, although weaker in magnitude, follows the same direction as previous empirical evidence. Power motivation, a dimension not independently examined in the comparative studies, showed the strongest association with work performance ($\rho = 0.693$, $p < 0.001$). Although direct comparisons are not currently possible, the magnitude of this relationship suggests that, within this organizational context, factors such as autonomy, decision-making authority, leadership opportunities, and influence over work processes may play a particularly important role in enhancing employee performance.

Conclusions

The findings indicate predominantly favorable levels of work motivation among employees of the Municipal Slaughterhouse of Portoviejo. This pattern was consistently observed across all motivational dimensions, each characterized by a predominance of moderate motivation levels, suggesting a relatively stable organizational environment. Nevertheless, the results also reveal the absence of sufficiently strong organizational drivers capable of fostering consistently high levels of employee motivation across the workforce.

Slightly more than half of the employees demonstrated a moderate level of work performance, while fewer than half achieved a high level of performance. These findings suggest that, although the institution possesses organizational and structural conditions that support satisfactory employee performance, there remains substantial potential for strengthening management practices, recognition systems, and employee development initiatives to achieve higher performance standards. Furthermore, the study identified a positive and statistically significant relationship between work motivation and work performance, confirming that higher levels of employee motivation are associated with improved job performance. At the dimensional level, extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation, and power motivation all exhibited significant positive correlations with work performance, although the strength of these relationships varied. Notably, power motivation demonstrated the strongest association, suggesting that factors such as autonomy, decision-making authority, and influence within the workplace play a particularly important role in enhancing employee performance in this public-sector organizational context.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Author contributions

Farah Farfán Vélez and Renier Esquivel García: Conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, supervision, validation, visualization, drafting the original manuscript and writing, review, and editing.

Data availability statement

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Statement on the use of AI

The authors acknowledge the use of generative AI and AI-assisted technologies to improve the readability and clarity of the article.

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