



ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Motivation and job performance of employees at the Rapi Natural Chip Company, Ecuador

Motivación y desempeño laboral de los colaboradores en la empresa de chifles Rapi natural, Ecuador

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Received: 11 September 2023 / Accepted: 12 December 2023 / Published online: 22 January 2024

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Abstract Rapi Natural is a company based in Santa Ana, Manabí, dedicated to producing plantain chips. This study aimed to analyze the relationship between employee motivation and job performance. The research was descriptive and explanatory, using a quasi-experimental and longitudinal design. The item involved all 10 employees of the company. Data collection techniques included structured observation, surveys, interviews with managers, and document analysis. The information was processed using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS software. The results show that motivation is not perceived equally among employees, which negatively affects job performance and the achievement of company goals. While some employees display high levels of commitment and responsibility, others express demotivation due to a lack of recognition, limited participation, or inadequate working conditions. It is concluded that motivation has a direct impact on performance. To enhance job performance, it is recommended that actions such as training programs, effective communication, fair recognition systems, and improvements in the work environment be implemented. These strategies would help align employee goals with the company's, strengthening organizational performance and long-term sustainability.

Keywords motivation, job performance, human talent, productivity, organizational climate.

Resumen Rapi Natural es una empresa de Santa Ana, Manabí, dedicada a la producción de chifles. El objetivo de este estudio fue analizar la relación entre la motivación de los colaboradores y su desempeño laboral. La investigación fue de tipo descriptivo y explicativo, con un diseño cuasi-experimental y longitudinal, aplicada a los 10 colaboradores de la empresa. Se utilizaron observación estructurada, encuestas, entrevistas a directivos y análisis documental como técnicas de recolección de datos, procesados con estadística descriptiva e inferencial mediante el software SPSS. Los resultados evidencian que la motivación no es percibida de forma equitativa entre los empleados, lo cual afecta su desempeño y el cumplimiento de los objetivos organizacionales. Si bien algunos colaboradores muestran altos niveles de compromiso y responsabilidad, otros manifiestan desmotivación por falta de reconocimiento, participación o condiciones laborales óptimas. Se concluye que la motivación incide directamente en el desempeño. Para mejorar el rendimiento laboral, se recomienda implementar acciones como capacitaciones, comunicación efectiva, reconocimiento equitativo y mejoras en el ambiente de trabajo. Estas medidas permitirían alinear los objetivos del personal con los de la empresa, potenciando su crecimiento y sostenibilidad.

Palabras clave motivación, desempeño laboral, talento humano, productividad, clima organizacional.

How to cite

Cedeño, N. Y., Burgos, S., & Armijos, J. I. (2024). Motivation and job performance of employees at the Rapi Natural Chip Company, Ecuador. *Journal of Management and Human Resources*, 2(1), 16-21. <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15292676>



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Introduction

The changes taking place in today's world, determined fundamentally by the effects of globalization, environmental deterioration, and the imprecision of the behavior of the variables that affect the business environment, appear as significant challenges that have an immediate impact on economic and social processes. Industrialized societies have undergone economic, social, and cultural changes. As a result, different spheres of human progress have been affected, harming people's quality of life, social relationships, and the bond that employees form with their work organizations. In this organizational context, job satisfaction is one of the most important aspects to consider (Gamero, 2004).

On the other hand, studies have been conducted on motivation and how it influences human behavior. According to Peiró & Prieto (2007), motivation is a psychological process related to the drive (amplitude), direction, and persistence of behavior. Greek thinkers made the first attempts to explain the nature of human motivation: Epicurus with the theory that argues that people are motivated to seek pleasure and avoid pain; on the other hand, Socrates tried to find the reason for the search for happiness in man, but Aristotle, based on observation of the facts, ended up concluding that some human behaviors were related to feelings of love that guide behavior (García et al., 2017).

According to Robbins and Judge (2009), motivation is the process that involves the intensity, direction, and persistence of an individual's effort toward achieving a goal. The author states that these three key elements are essential for achieving favorable work performance results that will benefit an organization.

Similarly, Chiavenato (2001) indicates that a person will be motivated if there is an interaction between the individual and the situation that he or she is experiencing at that moment. This means that the environment influences decisively, originating stimuli (internal and external), and that it is oriented towards an objective through expressions (impulse, desire, need, tendencies) that indicate the reasons for the person's behavior.

Likewise, Chiavenato (2011) says that people are the most important element within organizations for the fulfillment of objectives, while Cuesta (2015) indicates that managing people at work to meet the organization's objectives is a task that requires study, dedication, persistence, and sensitivity, focused on human values.

Nowadays, it is no surprise that the most valuable companies prioritize employee satisfaction. On the other hand, signs that reveal a problem with employee motivation inclu-

de absenteeism, poor performance, turnover, etc. Therefore, motivating employees is key to an organization; getting them to share and be part of its strategy is essential to achieving goals. To properly motivate employees, it is necessary to understand their tastes, needs, preferences, and, above all, who is being motivated, since people are complex and unique in their behavior and reactions (Miranda, 2016).

In light of the above, it is imperative to mention job performance, which, in general terms, can be said to be the individual performance of each employee in their assigned duties, in which the employee shows the most significant interest, enthusiasm, and confidence. According to Torres and Zegarra, job performance is a set of concrete actions. An employee's work is understood as the fulfillment of their duties. This is determined by factors associated with the job, the user, and the environment. This is evaluated to improve quality and qualify the profession.

Likewise, Chiavenato (2001) defines performance as the behavior of the worker in pursuit of the set objectives. In that sense, job performance is the collaborator's performance based on the functions and tasks required by their position in a limited period.

In this context, motivation and satisfaction are clearly closely linked due to the relationship of dependence between these two terms. Human resource motivation is fundamental and a necessary objective for managers. It allows them to predict individual and group behavior and guide them appropriately toward efficiency in the performance of their duties and the fulfillment of goals and objectives (Jimenez, 2006).

Some assessments have been developed in the literature to study motivation and job performance. One of these studies (Sum, 2015) conducted a study of motivation and job performance in the city of Quetzaltenango, Mexico, involving a population of thirty-four employees of the administrative staff of the food company, with a population of 12 women and 22 men between the ages of 18 and 44. The performance of the company's employees was examined; a Likert scale instrument consisting of 10 items was developed. Likewise, a standardized test or Psychosocial Motivation Scale 2 was used to assess the differential and dynamic structure of the subject's motivational system. The research demonstrated that the use of the psychosocial motivation scale instrument is integrated into job performance.

Furthermore, previous studies conducted in Ecuador have shown that motivation and job performance are interrelated in the professional field. According to these studies, (Toapanta, 2012) motivation is an important tool for individual

performance and essential for achieving specific organizational goals and objectives. This study proposed neurolinguistic programming as a solution to motivational strategies to increase productivity and quality.

This research combines people's motivation and job performance with developing the Rapi Natural chill product. It is based on the fact that plantain chips have become one of Ecuador's most widely consumed products, even at the export level. Plantain and/or banana chips (green or ripe) are savory snacks and are one of the most consumed traditional products in Ecuador.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive and explanatory research design to analyze the relationship between employee motivation and job performance at the Rapi Natural chip production company. The descriptive component aimed to characterize internal and external organizational features, while the explanatory phase sought to identify causal relationships between motivation and performance variables.

A quasi-experimental design with a non-random, purposive sample was adopted, comprising all current employees of the company (N = 10), including management, administrative staff, and production collaborators. The study followed a longitudinal approach to track the evolution of motivational factors and performance over time.

Data collection involved multiple techniques:

- Structured and participatory observation to assess real-time motivation and performance behaviors.
- Document analysis of company records, performance guidelines, and relevant regulations.
- Structured surveys administered to all collaborators to complement observational data.
- Structured interviews conducted with executives to gather insights on internal motivation strategies and performance evaluation practices.

The following research methods guided the analytical framework:

- Historical-logical to trace the development of performance evaluation systems.
- Analysis-synthesis and induction-deduction to process and interpret theoretical literature and field data.
- Systemic-structural-functional for mapping key components and relationships related to motivation and performance.

Statistical analysis included descriptive statistics (frequent

cy distributions) for population and diagnostic characterization, and inferential statistics during the practical application phase. Data were processed using SPSS v15.0 for Windows, applying percentage calculations as summary measures.

Results and discussion

After applying the information gathering tools, the following data were obtained to measure the job performance of Rapi Natural employees. In the first block of questions to assess motivation (Figure 1), it can be observed that people perceive motivation differently, on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is the lowest range and five is the highest.

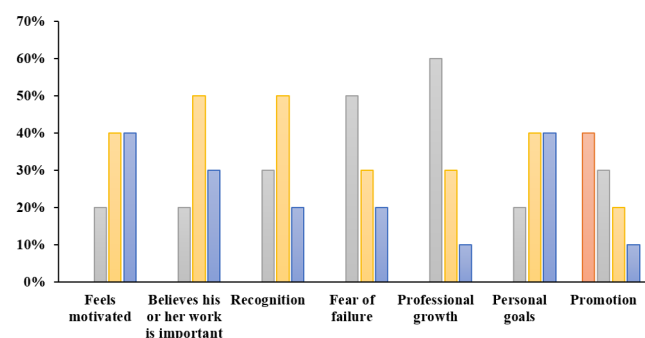


Figure 1. Motivation analysis.

In the second block of questions to evaluate job performance, on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is the lowest range and five the highest, the majority are in the highest range, that is, 4 and 5, considering that they know about the place where they work and how teamwork works (Figure 2), and, to a lesser extent, they are in range 3.

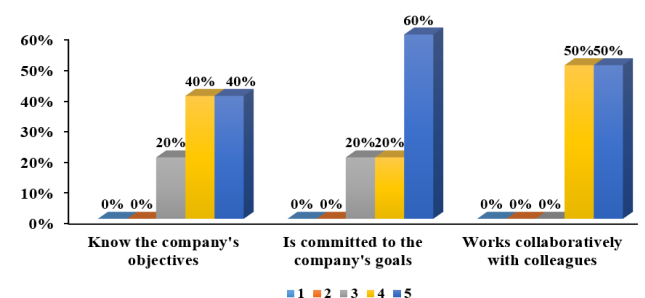


Figure 2. Analysis of the training of collaborators and the work team.

In the third block of questions evaluating job performance, on a scale of 1-5, with one being the lowest and five the highest, regarding the work environment and communication, it can be observed that employees mostly rate communication and adaptation to change at a level of 3; the highest is the

appropriate use of work materials and physical conditions in the environment (Figure 3), while the option of whether their ideas are considered is scattered between 2 and 4.

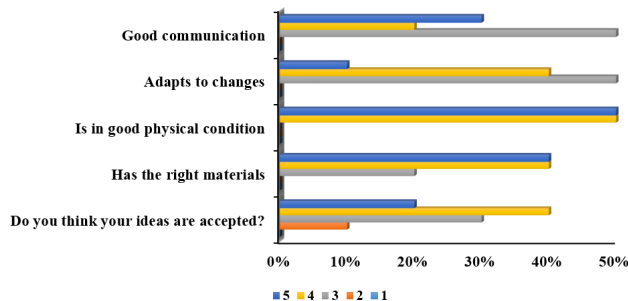


Figure 3. Analysis of the work environment and communication.

In the fourth block of questions to evaluate job performance, on a scale of 1-5, where one is the lowest and five the highest, employees are between ranks 4 and 5, considering high responsibility in their workday (Figure 4).

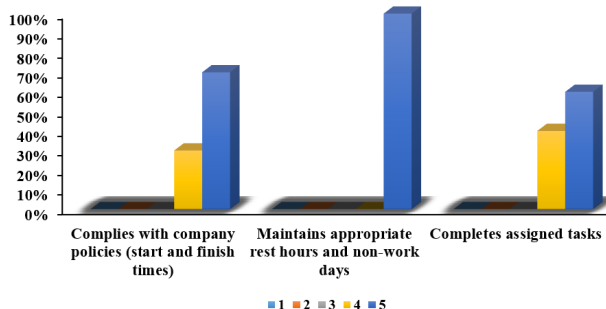


Figure 4. Analysis of the responsibility of collaborators

In the fifth and final block of questions to evaluate job performance, on a scale of 1-5, where one is the lowest and five the highest, all staff use safety equipment, 60% consider their jobs secure (Figure 5), and 50% cooperate with maintaining the cleanliness of work areas.

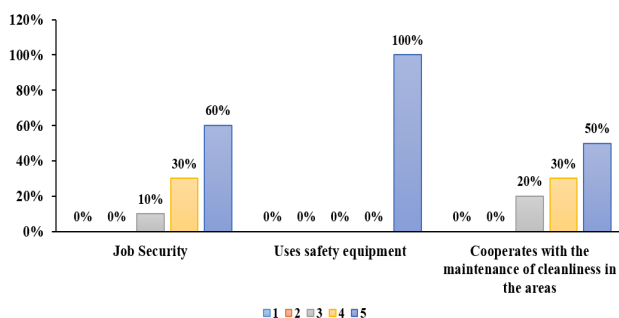


Figure 5. Safety and hygiene analysis.

Once the results have been presented, it can be highlighted that motivation is an internal state that activates, directs, and maintains a person's behavior toward specific goals or ends; it is the impulse that moves a person to perform specific actions and persist in them until their completion. At Rapi Natural, what is most worrying is the motivation block, since while it is true that a high percentage of collaborators are in high ranks, there is a significant number of them who are not motivated. It is worth emphasizing that each individual is important and everyone should be equally reached. This, in turn, will improve each of the company's performance and thus achieve its objectives.

The results obtained at Rapi Natural demonstrate a direct relationship between motivation and job performance, in line with the assertions of Robbins and Judge (2009), who emphasize that effort's intensity, direction, and persistence are fundamental to achieving organizational objectives. In the case of Rapi Natural, unequal motivation among employees tangibly affects overall performance.

Chiavenato (2011) has warned that motivation derives from internal factors and the immediate environment. In this study, elements such as the work environment, participation in decisions, and recognition were key to explaining the differences in perceived motivation. This coincides with the findings of Sum (2015), who found that organizational support and personal appreciation directly impacted performance in a similar study on a food company.

The research also confirms Herzberg et al. (1959) postulates regarding motivational and hygiene factors. Physical working conditions, safety, and the use of protective equipment—"hygienic" aspects—are relatively well covered at Rapi Natural, while recognition and participation—"motivating" factors—are deficient. This lack of motivators explains the partial motivation detected among employees.

In addition, Deci and Ryan (1985) suggested that a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness is essential for intrinsic motivation. At Rapi Natural, results show that employees do not always feel that their ideas are considered, which impacts autonomy and a sense of belonging, weakening internal motivation.

Additionally, the data support the observations of Toapan-ta (2012), who in his study in Ecuador highlighted that employee motivation is essential for quality and productivity in small businesses. At Rapi Natural, the lack of motivation among a significant portion of the workforce compromises the ability to achieve sustainable strategic objectives.

Finally, Miranda (2016) points out that understanding individual employee needs is vital to designing effective motivation strategies. The present study reinforces this idea: a generalized motivation approach is insufficient; recognition and participation mechanisms must be personalized for each employee.

Overall, the findings underscore that while there are positive aspects such as accountability and the use of safety measures, the lack of consistent recognition and participation policies limits employees' performance potential. Improving these aspects can translate into a stronger organizational climate and, consequently, a stronger company's productivity.

Through research, we achieved objectives such as determining factors that influence motivation, which in this case are the workplace, the environment, individual participation and autonomy, and working conditions.

Working conditions must be improved to achieve better job performance. A workplace that employees tolerate and enjoy can foster employee motivation and deliver better results, such as job fit, participation, recognition, and goal setting, which is a mutual benefit for both the company and the employee.

Conclusions

Research conducted at Rapi Natural demonstrates a clear connection between employee motivation and job performance. However, significant disparities in motivation levels among staff have negatively impacted overall productivity. While positive aspects exist, such as strong adherence to safety protocols and task accountability, key motivational drivers like recognition, involvement in decision-making, and professional growth opportunities require immediate attention. The findings suggest that focusing solely on basic workplace conditions is insufficient; instead, fostering intrinsic motivation is essential for achieving sustained high performance. The company risks perpetuating performance gaps and declining employee engagement without these improvements. Rapi Natural should implement fair recognition systems to address these challenges, empower employees through participatory decision-making, cultivate autonomy and belonging, and maintain robust workplace safety standards. These measures would enhance operational results and strengthen organizational commitment and long-term competitiveness.

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Conflicts of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Author contributions

Conceptualization: Burgos, S. and Armijos, J. I. **Data curation:** Cedeño, N. Y., Burgos Mendoza, S. and Armijos, J. I. **Formal analysis:** Cedeño, N. Y., Burgos, S. and Armijos, J. I. **Research:** Burgos, S. and Armijos, J. I. **Methodology:** Cedeño, N. Y. and Armijos, J. I. **Supervision:** Cedeño, N. Y., Burgos, S. and Armijos, J. I. **Validation:** Cedeño, N. Y., Burgos, S. and Armijos, J. I. **Visualization:** Cedeño, N. Y., and Armijos, J. I. **Writing the original draft:** Cedeño, N. Y., Burgos, S. and Armijos, J. I. **Writing, review and editing:** Burgos, S. and Armijos, J. I.

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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