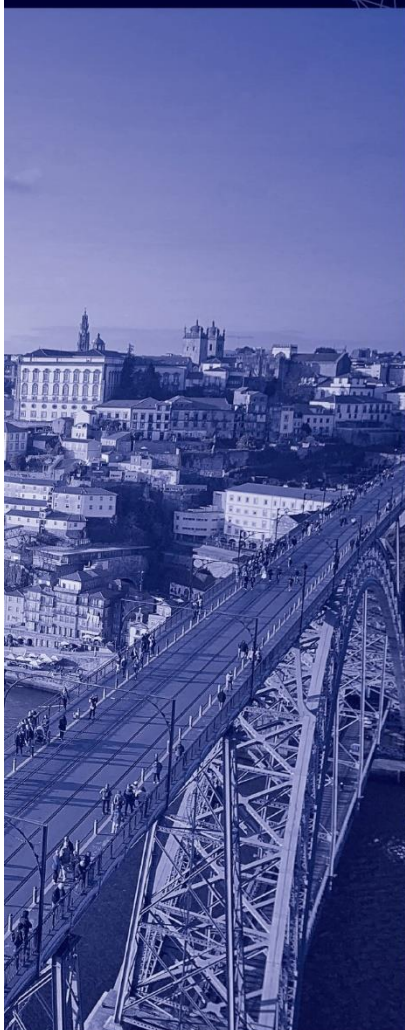


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The motivations of professionals in the hospital sector: A quantitative study

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this paper is to analyse the motivations of employees in the hospital sector and to understand the extent to which socio-demographic characteristics and occupational status are able to influence different types of motivation.

Methodology: The methodology of the research is quantitative. The research has an exploratory nature, and the data analysis has a descriptive nature. The primary data were collected by means of a questionnaire survey that was administered to hospital professionals in the north of the country.

Results: The results show that intrinsic motivation is predominant over extrinsic motivation among professionals working in the hospital sector. The research also suggests that gender, academic qualifications, sector of activity and employment relationship condition the level of intrinsic motivation observed.

Research limitations: This study is limited by the sample size and characteristics, especially its focus on the hospitals in the north of the country.

Originality: The study of motives has been conducted in the context of professionals in the hospital field

Keywords: *Motivation; Intrinsic Motivation; Extrinsic Motivation; Hospital Sector; Health professionals.*

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1. Introduction

Motivation has been identified as an important element in the well-being of employees and the success of organisations (Caetano & Vala, 2007). Despite the crucial role that motivation plays in the management of people and organisations, it is also a very challenging subject, whose complexity is further increased by the fact that what motivates an individual can vary from person to person (Nohria et al., 2008) and according to the specific context experienced (Legault, 2016; Ryan & Deci, 2000). For this reason, research into the understanding of motivation in organisations is considered to be particularly important (Paula, 2005).

Work in the hospital sector, although very challenging, is fundamental for society as it involves activities and practices carried out by professionals and multidisciplinary teams to help the population with health problems or at risk (Costa, 2017).

In this context, it is important to understand the motivations of professionals working in the hospital sector and the main factors that may influence their level of motivation. With this in mind, the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents the literature review. This is followed by a description of the methodology in section 3. The results are presented in section 4, followed by a discussion in section 5.

2. Literature Review

Overall, motivation can be understood as a force, an impulse, a need or a predisposition that allows the subject to outline a particular action with a concrete goal (Pintrinch, 2003; Kumi, 2023). Thus, a motivated behaviour is a behaviour

that is activated and directed towards a specific goal (Rodrigues, 1998; Triwulan et al., 2023).

For Spector (2002), motivation is related to the direction, intensity and persistence of a behaviour over time. According to the same author, direction refers to the choice of certain behaviours among a variety of possible behaviours. Intensity, in turn, refers to the effort a person puts into performing a task, while persistence refers to the continued adaptation to a particular type of behaviour over time. Similarly, Robbins (2005) argues that motivation has three main characteristics, namely direction – that means. the focus on the goal and how to achieve it; intensity, which is the difference between satisfaction/commitment; and persistence, which shows whether it is constant over time.

Motivation is closely related to the strength of the motives or impulses that initiate and sustain an individual's behaviour, and as long as this strength persists, the behaviour will remain active (Berry, 1998; Lopes, 2012; Kumi, 2023).

Work motivation can be understood as a psychological state of willingness to fulfil and achieve a goal, and a person who says they are motivated to work is presenting someone with a positive way of doing the same task. However, it is necessary to understand the motives that lead and influence employees to this state of mind. However, it should also be noted that motivation varies between individuals and is also influenced by environment or context (Daniel & Metcalf, 2005; Kumi, 2023; Rocha, 2007;).

There are two main types of motivation (Triwulan et al., 2023): intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to an inherently satisfying or pleasurable engagement that is non-instrumental in nature, meaning that the action is not dependent on an outcome external to the behaviour itself (Legault, 2016). On the

other hand, extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of a behaviour that is fundamentally dependent on outcomes that are separable from the individual's own action, and is therefore classified as instrumental in nature (Legault, 2016; Ryan & Deci; 2000; Kotera et al., 2022).

3. Methodology

To reach the research objectives, a quantitative methodology was chosen, using a questionnaire survey (Borg & Gall, 2002), aimed at hospital workers in the northern region, in the three sectors of activity: private, public and social.

The questionnaire included a first section to collect general information from the respondents, which was socio-demographic and related to professional situations.

The second section of the questionnaire aimed to assess the individual's motivation. Like Barbosa (2013), who had already tested dimensions relevant to the study in another sector, the WEIMS scale - Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale - developed by Tremblay et al. (2009) was used as a reference.

The questionnaire was distributed online between June and July 2022 and yielded 153 valid responses.

4. Results

General characterisation of respondents

Table 1 summarises the main characteristics of the sample of 153 hospital workers.

Table I: Sample characterisation

Variable		N	%
Age	18-29	35	22,9
	30-39	58	37,9
	40-49	39	25,5
	50-59	18	11,8
	Over 60	3	2,0
Gender	Female	113	73,9
	Male	40	26,1
Academic qualifications	Lower than Secondary School	2	1,3
	Secondary Education	24	15,7
	Bachelor	81	52,9
	Master	28	18,3
	PhD	18	11,8
Professional Category	Operational Assistant	15	9,8
	Technical Assistant	15	9,8
	Health assistant	15	9,8
	Nurse	70	45,8
	Doctor	9	5,9
	Other	29	19,0
Sector of Activity	Private Sector	48	31,4
	Public Sector	85	55,6
	Social Sector	20	13,1
Type of employment contract	Temporary work regime	2	1,3
	Service agreements	7	4,6
	Permanent contract	82	53,6
	Fixed-term contract	39	25,5
	Contract for an uncertain term	23	15,0
Number of years of service in the organisation	Less than 1 year	13	8,5

	From 1 to 3 years	38	24,8
	From 4 to 10 years	44	28,8
	From 11 to 15 years	22	14,4
	From 16 to 20 years	12	7,8
	From 21 to 25 years	10	6,5
	Over 25 years	14	9,2

Source: Own Elaboration

Motivation of professionals in the hospital sector

Table 2 systematises the responses to the different variables included in the questionnaire. The variables analysed include the fact that respondents feel satisfied when they successfully carry out difficult tasks (average score of 3.80 on a 5-point scale), the fact that work is an important part of their life (average score of 3.75) or the fulfilment associated with learning new things (average score of 3.67). On the other hand, the variables least valued by respondents were the remuneration received (average score 2.51) or the fact that doing their job allowed them to earn money (average score 2.98).

Table II: Characterisation of the motivation variables

Variable	(1) %	(2) %	(3) %	(4) %	(5) %	Average	Standard Deviation
Because this is the type of work I chose to do to attain a certain lifestyle.	9,8	18	16,3	49	6,5	3,24	1,13
For the income it provides me.	22,2	34	16,3	26	2	2,51	1,15
Because I derive much pleasure from learning new things.	4,6	12	14,4	49	19,6	3,67	1,07
Because it has become a fundamental part of who I am.	6,5	12	19,6	43	19	3,56	1,12

Because I want to succeed at this job, if not I would be very ashamed of myself.	15	15	20,3	37	13,1	3,18	1,27
Because I chose this type of work to attain my career goals.	13,1	18	23,5	33	12,4	3,14	1,23
For the satisfaction I experience from taking on interesting challenges.	5,2	11	20,3	43	20,9	3,63	1,09
Because it allows me to earn money.	17	18	19,6	40	5,2	2,98	1,22
Because it is part of the way in which I have chosen to live my life.	5,9	14	22,2	45	13,1	3,46	1,07
Because I want to be very good at this work, otherwise I would be very disappointed.	7,8	12	20,9	43	16,3	3,47	1,14
Because I want to be a "winner" in life.	11,1	16	30,1	35	7,8	3,12	1,12
Because it is the type of work I have chosen to attain certain important objectives.	7,8	14	22,2	46	9,8	3,37	1,09
For the satisfaction I experience when I am successful at doing difficult tasks.	3,3	8,5	15	51	22,2	3,8	0,99
Because this type of work provides me with security.	5,2	16	25,5	46	7,8	3,35	1,01
Because this job is a part of my life.	4,6	7,2	19,6	46	22,2	3,75	1,03

Note: (1) Does not correspond at all; (5) Corresponds exactly.

Source: Own Elaboration

In order to summarise the information obtained, a factor analysis was carried out using principal component analysis, which led to the formation of two main components: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

The first component, called intrinsic motivation, has an eigenvalue of 7.378, with an explained variance of 49.19 per cent, showing a very good level of internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.929) (Table 2). The second component, related to extrinsic motivation, has an eigenvalue of 1.853, explaining 12.35% of the total variance in the data and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.815.

Table III: Factor Analysis

	Loading	Eigenv alues	% Variance	% Acc. Variance	Cronbach' s Alpha
Component 1. Intrinsic Motivation		7,378	49,19%	49,19%	0,929
Because I derive much pleasure from learning new things.	0,739				
Because it has become a fundamental part of who I am.	0,849				
Because I want to succeed at this job, if not I would be very ashamed of myself.	0,712				
Because I chose this type of work to attain my career goals.	0,705				
For the satisfaction I experience from taking on interesting challenges	0,821				
Because it is part of the way in which I have chosen to live my life.	0,711				
Because I want to be very good at this work, otherwise I would be very disappointed.	0,739				
Because I want to be a “winner” in life.	0,518				
Because it is the type of work I have chosen to attain certain important objectives.	0,646				
For the satisfaction I experience when I am successful at doing difficult tasks.	0,750				
Because this job is a part of my life.	0,769				
Component 2: Extrinsic Motivation		1,853	12,35%	61,54%	0,815
Because this is the type of work I chose to do to attain a certain lifestyle.	0,735				
For the income it provides me.	0,815				
Because it allows me to earn money.	0,865				
Because this type of work provides me with security.	0,656				

Extraction method: principal component analysis; Rotation method: varimax, with Kaiser normalisation; KMO measure = 0.901; Bartlett's test of sphericity: $p < 0.000$.

Source: Own Elaboration

To gain a better understanding of the motivation of hospital workers, the index of each of the main components was then calculated based on the weighted average of the factor weights. A bivariate analysis was used to examine the extent to which the respondents' level of motivation was conditioned by their socio-demographic characteristics and professional situation.

The analysis of Table 4 shows that for all age groups the level of intrinsic motivation is always higher than extrinsic motivation. However, it can be seen

that the people with the highest level of intrinsic motivation are those aged 60 and over. It is also in this age group that we see a greater difference between the levels of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Analysing motivation according to gender, it can be seen that for women, intrinsic motivation (3.58) is considerably higher than extrinsic motivation (2.97). In men, intrinsic motivation is also the most relevant, although the difference in the levels of each dimension is not as marked (average value of 3.22 and 3.07 respectively).

In respondents with different levels of qualifications, intrinsic motivation is always the most evident. However, it is in the case of individuals with a doctorate or bachelor's degree that the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is most marked. In cases where respondents have less than a secondary education qualification, the relevance of intrinsic motivation is very close to that of extrinsic motivation (average value of 2.55 and 2.52, respectively).

When considering the sector of work, the private sector has the highest level of motivation (mean of 3.72 on intrinsic motivation and mean of 3.18 on extrinsic motivation). The results show that in both the private and public sectors, health professionals' intrinsic motivation is higher than their extrinsic motivation. In the social sector, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have the same average value (3.34).

It can also be seen that the average values observed for the intrinsic motivation component are higher than those for the extrinsic component, regardless of the length of service or employment contract held (Table 4); however, the difference between the two levels of motivation is greatest for employees with a permanent contract; on the other hand, the average values observed are the closest for

temporary workers (average value for intrinsic motivation 3.62; average extrinsic motivation: 3.5).

Table IV – Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation according to individual characteristics and professional situation

Variable	Category	Intrinsic Motivation	Extrinsic motivation
Age	18-29	3,63	3,12
	30-39	3,48	2,97
	40-49	3,37	2,97
	50-59	3,29	2,86
	Over 60	4,47	3,38
Gender	Female	3,58	2,97
	Male	3,22	3,07
Academic qualifications	Lower than Secondary School	2,55	2,52
	Secondary Education	3,26	3,13
	Bachelor	3,41	2,89
	Master	3,50	3,00
	PhD	4,22	3,35
Sector of Activity	Private Sector	3,72	3,18
	Public Sector	3,38	2,82
	Social Sector	3,34	3,34
Type of employment contract	Temporary work regime	3,62	3,50
	Service agreements	3,63	3,19
	Permanent contract	3,25	2,80
	Fixed-term contract	3,92	3,45
	Contract for an uncertain term	3,54	2,86
Number of years of service in the organisation	Less than 1 year	3,69	2,88
	From 1 to 3 years	3,58	3,30
	From 4 to 10 years	3,63	2,97
	From 11 to 15 years	3,21	3,01
	From 16 to 20 years	3,31	2,81

	From 21 to 25 years	2,87	2,37
	Over 25 years	3,60	2,95

Source: Own Elaboration

The correlations between the variables analysed were then analysed using Pearson's coefficient.

The analysis performed shows that there are statistically significant differences in the level of intrinsic motivation observed in the respondents according to gender ($r=-0,182$, $\alpha=0,05$), level of academic qualification ($r=0,306$, $\alpha=0,01$), sector of activity ($r=-0,170$, $\alpha=0,05$) and Type of employment contract ($r=0,163$, $\alpha=0,05$). On the other hand, regarding extrinsic motivation, there was no statistically significant relationship between the respondents' level of extrinsic motivation and any of the variables related to their socio-demographic characteristics or professional situation.

5. Discussion

The research shows that the component where hospital workers are most motivated is intrinsic motivation. The results show that it is the content of the work itself, rather than the context or consequences of the work, that hospital workers value most, with aspects such as professional fulfilment, overcoming and learning being prominent. As Vallerand (2014) points out, intrinsic motivation plays an important role in the hospital work environment.

As suggested by the literature (Legault, 2016; Ryan & Deci; 2000), personal characteristics and the external context are able to influence motivation levels,

although only with regard to intrinsic motivation, and their influence on extrinsic motivation levels has been demonstrated.

6. Conclusion

The research aimed to understand the main motivations of professionals in the hospital sector and the extent to which these are or are not conditioned by the characteristics of the employees and their professional status. It can be concluded that there is a predominance of intrinsic motivation over extrinsic motivation among the professionals working in the sector. The results obtained indicate that some personal characteristics and professional conditions are associated with higher levels of intrinsic motivation, but that this influence is not observed at the level of extrinsic motivation. The research therefore suggests the existence of different employee groups regarding motivation. This finding has practical implications for hospital human resource managers, who need to develop human resource management strategies tailored to the motivational profile of different groups of employees, and thus improve employee performance, which is fundamental to the overall performance of healthcare systems.

The main limitation of the research carried out was the size and composition of the sample, in particular the fact that it was located in the north of the country for reasons of convenience. In addition, the research was based on the perceptions of staff. We should also mention the exploratory nature of the research and the descriptive nature of the article, which suggest caution in generalising the results obtained.

In the future, it would be useful to extend the research to cover all of Portugal and to include other health professionals, to allow a comparative study of the motivations for working.

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