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IMPACT OF MOTIVATION ON PROJECT TEAMS' PERFORMANCE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

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PROGRAM: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

PROPOSAL FOR MASTER THESIS OR APPLIED PROJECT

**TITLE: IMPACT OF MOTIVATION ON PROJECT TEAMS' PERFORMANCE IN INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY**

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ABSTRACT

Sufficient motivation is a critical ingredient for any organization to derive optimal performances from their workforce. Project teams are an integral part of the efficient conduction of an information and communication technology company's core operations. This study is dictated towards the evaluation of the main factors that influence the level of motivation portrayed by team members of information technology project teams. Through a comprehensive literature review, the research was able to uncover insightful trends in motivation patterns among project team members that might be useful to project managers. The findings of this research conclude that a project team manager can improve the motivation of his or her subordinates through proper supervision, provision of training, and through setting proper expectations. A survey conducted also indicated that 66.67% of employees feel motivated by being recognized and rewarded for their good efforts. Additionally, 28.57% of employees feel motivated by salary increments.

Keywords: Employees' motivation, intrinsic factors, productivity, training, returns

1. INTRODUCTION

The lack of motivation among the project team members is a major issue facing most organizations, in the world today. In most cases, motivational issues emanate from poor management who fail to address various intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors. The intrinsic factors include factors such as achievement, recognition, responsibility and career advancement. On the other hand, extrinsic factors include work conditions, job security, policy, salary, benefits provided, and workplace supervision. As a result, it is important for project leaders consider motivation as a tool that can help an organization attain high productivity. (Baldonado, 2015) claims that improving motivation among the project team members would lead to various benefits to an organization. As a result, it is important for more research to be carried out on this topic.

The research findings would be very important for the project managers since they would enable them to produce various strategies to improve their members' morale and productivity. This thesis evaluates the efficiencies and discrepancies of the current methods used to motivate project teams. Moreover, it analyzes how motivation affects the performance of individual members and the project team in general. It is critical to note that individual performance plays a key role in determining the overall productivity of an organization.

Therefore, improving individual performances would result in an increase in the overall productivity. Even though various studies have examined this topic, very few have analyzed the impact of motivation specifically for project team members. This thesis will not only

focus on individual performance, but it will also look at how motivation affects the team spirit and cohesion of the entire project team. Through this approach, the research will have covered all the critical components that need to be understood regarding project teams to increase the credibility of its findings. The definitions section defines key terms that will be used throughout the thesis. The problem statement section highlights how a lack of motivation is a major concern for organizations. This section aims to justify the need for high motivation among the project teams. The literature review section will highlight the findings of various studies that have been carried on this topic. The proposed solutions sections highlight various recommendations that organizations can adopt to improve project teams' motivation.

Definitions

No	Term	Definition
1	Motivation	The reason that influences a person to behave in a certain way. (Randhawa, 2007) defines motivation as “the act of stimulating someone to get a desired course of action” (p. 17).
2	Project Team	A group of people put together to achieve a common goal usually to implement programs.
3	Performance	The action of executing a task

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND JUSTIFICATION

The problem statement focuses on how motivation is a problem for project teams in the IT industry. This research will evaluate how conflicting interests and the struggle for attention affects the level of performance delivered by individuals in information technology project teams. It will also investigate how motivation affects the performance of the entire project team. This is because not much attention has been paid towards understanding this phenomenon. Despite the level of motivation portrayed by team members being a primary influence on the level of their performances, it is also important to uncover the impact of motivation on project teams' performances since it dictates the success of the project being implemented. Additionally, the findings of this research will facilitate the formulation of project management methods that can enhance not only the performance of team members but also their well-being and job satisfaction. This research will also help project team members to know the best methods to use in motivating their team members. Information gathered from this research will help project team leaders in the information technology industry to determine how to align the interests of each individual project team member in a way that fosters cohesion and the morale of the entire project team.

Project team leaders who ensure that their team members are adequately motivated, enjoy more project success as compared to those that do not. This is because project teams consisting of team members who lack motivation draw below average performances of the individual members. The main objective of this thesis is to evaluate the effects of motivation on the performance of project teams. The thesis only evaluates the motivation phenomenon in project management. The thesis does not cover other factors that affect the performance of project team

members. The thesis also provides strategic solutions that could enhance the motivation and performance of project teams. The main hypothesis for this thesis would be: Increased motivation among the project team members leads to an increased performance of the team. The thesis will be limited in its scope. It will not evaluate other factors that would significantly affect project team performance. The main deliverables will be an extensive literature review section and proposed solutions section. The thesis will highly rely on secondary research. Other research studies will be investigated, to determine if the motivation has an impact on project team performance.

This research will lay focus on the issue of conflicting interests and how they adversely affect both the level of motivation and performance of project team members in the information technology industry. The lack of proper evaluation of the functions to be served by each member in project teams in IT exposes team leaders in the industry to the risk of having a poor team spirit and enhanced resistance from most project team members. The conflict and tension brought about by unaligned individual interests negatively affects the performance of the entire project team. It also contributes to the increase of estranged relationships among various team members. It is recommended to get to the root of the causes of this problem to suppress the adverse effects that it imposes on the motivation and performance of project teams in the information and technology industry. The lack of direct motivation causes a high turnover rate, meager levels of productivity and below par performances from individual project team members. The conflicting interests held by various members of project teams in the IT industry increases the chances of heated arguments between project team members during meetings. Heated arguments create an unfriendly working environment that can reduce the productivity of individual team members.

Additionally, the estranged relationships that might result from the heated arguments might influence project team members to quit. This will drive the employee turnover to reach rates that are unfavorably high. Finding a solution to eliminate the conflicting interests held among individual team members will improve the productivity of the members and improve the success-rate of implementing projects in the IT industry.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW -- ANALYSIS OF RELATED WORK

Motivation can define as a “force within an individual that accounts for the level, direction, and persistence of effort expended at work” (Schermerhorn et al., (2014, p.100). Motivation is very vital for the IT project teams. IT can enable achieve great performance. In the recent years, the IT project teams have generally experienced low motivation. This is often due to the high workload and stress levels. Due to low motivation, IT organizations have over the years’ experienced high turnover. According to Mak & Sockel (2001), employees who have low job satisfaction were more likely to exit from a company. The low motivation is majorly attributable to their bad lifestyle. Stinson (2010) notes that the lifestyle of many IT project members contributes to their low morale. They often work too much, take on many responsibilities, and do not get enough sleep. Most IT professionals often have various signs of burnout such as headaches, sense of failure, detachment, decreased sense of accomplishment, lowered immunity. All of which play a great role in reducing their motivation.

Why the Problem Has Not Been Solved

Low motivation among the information technology has not been solved for a while due to various reasons. First, the number of IT professionals is currently lower than the demand. It is critical to note that the number of computers around the world is close to one billion. However, the number of the IT professionals has been declining very fast (Bolhari et al., 2012). As a result, companies are often forced to overwork their IT professionals. As a result, the IT project members undergo high occupational stress, which makes them experience low morale. Padma et al. (2015) acknowledge that “stress is high in software profession because of their nature of work, target, achievements, night shift, over workload” (para.1). Stinson (2010) notes that an increase in stress makes an individual begin to lose the motivation that led him to take on a role in the first place. In most cases, many IT professionals face constant pressure to deliver services efficiently, thereby lowering their morale.

Second, the IT project members are not engaged in various operations of the organizations they operate in. According to Gallo (2011), “employers want to see how their work contributes to larger corporate objectives” (p. 2). In the IT industry, most project team members are disengaged, thereby, experience a negative work experience. They are often just given only IT assignments to execute, without matching them to the overall organizational mission and vision. Third, most managers in the IT industry fail to find the right balance between getting the job done and ensuring that the IT project team members have a positive working environment. It is critical to note that most managers are often determined to meet the organizational mission and vision, without paying attention to the welfare of their employees. In the long-run, this ends up

hurting the employees. Lawler (1994) found out that most managers in IT firms fail to focus on work redesign aimed at improving motivation.

Importance of Motivation among IT Project Members

Motivation is very important for IT project members. According to Sandhya & Kumar (2011), employee motivation can help the employer to improve organizational performance. Moreover, motivated employees are more likely to stay in the organization. As a result, it can help organizations achieve a low employee turnover.

Performance Management Approaches

A clear majority of the scholars whose works were reviewed to facilitate this study acknowledge that various performance management approaches can be utilized to increase the level of motivation exhibited by employees.

Supervision

Employee supervision is one of the most effective approaches that enhance the level of motivation demonstrated by employees. In their study, Menon et al. (2008) discovered that “employees showed high levels of motivation and identified intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation and positive and negative characteristics of supervision”. The application of positive forms of supervision can increase the performance and morale of IT companies’ employees. Rao, Sreenivasan & Babu (2015) also support this assertion by arguing that supervision increases productivity and performance, which are key determinants of an employee’s morale. Supervision can also help to eliminate some of the challenges that members of IT project teams experience in the process of project implementation.

Training

Training is another critical performance management approach that can be used to improve the morale of employees in the IT industry. Sharma & Sharma (2016) indicate that the offering of sufficient learning platforms to employees increases the job knowledge and comfort, thus motivating them to strive to perform at their optimal levels. Additionally, the findings of Sharma & Sharma's study indicated that high levels of motivation and performance are directly linked to training. This observation is further supported by Tabassi, Ramli & Bakar (2011) who uncovered the strong relationship that exists between the motivation of an organization's employees and the training opportunities availed to them. Tabassi, Ramli & Bakar (2011)'s study indicated that a "companies' productivity is strongly correlated with policies and practices in training and motivating their staff and workforce" para 21. The provision of sufficient training opportunities with IT firms can enhance the level of their employee motivation.

Setting Appropriate Expectations

The setting of appropriate expectations is also another performance management approach that can be instrumental to the inclination of the level of motivation among members of IT project teams. Schunk & Zimmerman (2012) assert that the provision of SMART objectives can offer appropriate challenges which will draw motivation from employees experiencing low levels of morale. The setting of achievable objectives within a firm encourages friendly competitions among employee which can improve motivation (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2012). The way an organization determines its expectations from employees also dictates their motivation as illustrated by Bjerke & Renger (2017). In their study, Bjerke & Renger (2017)

indicate the customization of individual expectations to suit the abilities of specific employees can also increase their levels of motivation.

Motivational Theories

Second, the managers should apply the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs & Two-Factor motivational theories to improve workplace motivation and job satisfaction.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs can play a great role in improving motivation for project teams. According to the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, organizations should satisfy five main needs: psychological, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Sandhya & Kumar, 2011; Cherry, 2014). According to Sandhya & Kumar (2011), IT organizations should put strategies in place that would enable them to satisfy the various needs of their project teams. It is critical to note that the lower needs should be satisfied first, before the other level needs are satisfied. Montana & Charnov (2000) claims that there is a "natural trend in which individuals become aware of and therefore are motivated" by the needs in ascending order (p.228).

Two-factor Theory

According to the Two-factor theory of motivation, developed by Fredrick Herzberg, these organizations should pay attention to satisfiers and motivators. DuBrin (2011) defines satisfiers as those elements that, if present would lead to high job satisfaction among employees. On the other hand, motivators are those elements that would lead to motivate the employee. According to Sandhya & Kumar (2011), the organizations "should motivate employees by adopting a democratic approach to management and by improving the nature and content of the actual job. Some of the methods that can be employed include job enlargement, enrichment, and

empowerment. DuBrin (2011) notes that the two-factor theory underlies the “philosophy of job design through job enrichment and the job characteristics model” (p.381).

Self-efficacy Theory

Consequently, the IT project teams can adopt the self-efficacy theory. Cherian & Jacob (2013) define the self-efficacy concept as an important motivational construct of self-beliefs with which team members can accomplish a task. The IT Project team should use this theory by employing strategies such as goal setting and feedback. According to Schunk (1995), goal setting and feedback influence self-efficacy and motivation.

Other Aspects of Motivation

Third, the managers should consider other aspects of motivation: compensation, workplace environment, growth, compensation, and support. Sandhya & Kumar (2011) claim that the performance of the IT project team members often relates to the pay. As a result, the IT organizations should come up with equitable compensation strategies, which would help them improve the motivation levels of the IT project teams. Consequently, the senior managers should provide employees with growth opportunities. According to Sandhya & Kumar (2011), “growth in an employee’s career is a good motivating factor. Therefore, the IT organizations should provide their employees with opportunities for growth. In addition, due to high-stress levels often experienced by IT project members, it is important for these organizations to provide great support services for these members.

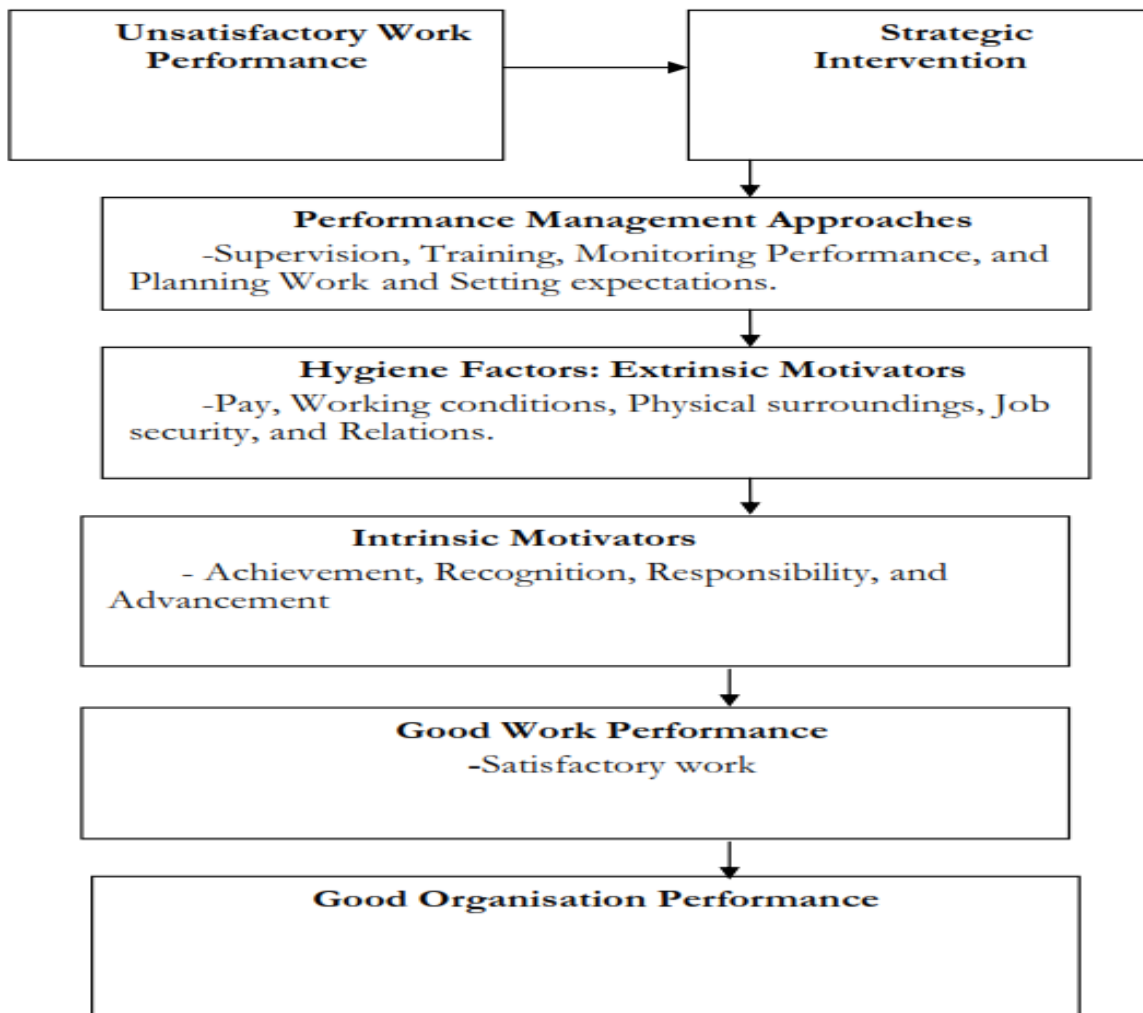
Workplace Environment

Fourth, the IT project teams should create a transparent work culture. Sandhya & Kumar (2011) acknowledge that “open-mindedness and transparent work culture play an important role

in employee retention” and motivation. Therefore, the IT project team members should rigorously communicate with their colleagues, when working on various IT projects. This will help them feel part of the team, thereby improving their morale. Fifth, the IT project team managers should include intrinsic motivators such as praise and reward. According to Fortenbery (2015), “effective leaders must stress the importance of such intrinsic motivators as an achievement, recognition, fulfillment, responsibility, advancement, and growth” (para. 11).

Conceptual Framework

The IT project teams can use the following conceptual framework, to improve their motivation.



4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Experimental Design

To evaluate the impact of project team motivation in information technology teams, a survey was conducted in which 21 team members were required to answer both open-ended and closed questions. The participants were drawn from various organizations to guarantee accurate responses. Seven of the participants were project managers in their respective organizations, while 14 team members were just team members. 13 participants were of the male gender, while 8 members were of the female gender. Participants who took the survey had worked in project teams for at least 1 year. 47.62 percent of the participants had worked with the company for more than 3 years. 42.86 participants had worked in project teams for a period of one to three years. The participants were drawn from various professional backgrounds, namely: project managers, business analysts, testers, and programmers among other professional fields. 47.62 percent of the participants were programmers.

Experimental Results

The majority of the participants was satisfied with their position at the company. It is critical to note that only 4.76 percent participants gave a rating of less than three. This implied that all the participants were satisfied with their position in their respective organizations. From the study, it was also evident that most participants were motivated by an acknowledgment. 57.14 percent participants believed that an acknowledgment boosted their morale. 19.05 percent of the participants were highly motivated by a salary increase. It was shocking to note that no

participant was motivated by a bonus. Few participants were motivated by promotion and training.

28.57 percent of the participants felt that a salary increase, and training had the least impact on their motivation. 66.67 percent of the participants felt that acknowledgment was an important motivating factor, which had a significant effect on the IT professionals. Most participants were generally satisfied with their organizations and their current positions. The table below highlights the weighted average of their responses. Approximately 91 percent of the participants felt that their personal motivation played a great role in helping the organization succeed.

Table 1: Numerical Scores

No		Weighted Average
1	My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment.	4.1
2	I have the tools and resources to do my job well.	4.48
3	The Company does an excellent job of keeping employees informed about matters affecting us.	4.24
4	My job makes good use of my skills and abilities.	4.43
5	My company pays me well	3.71
6	There is cooperation among my team members/employees within the company	4.29
7	I experience personal growth, such as updating skills and learning different jobs	4.29
8	I am rewarded for the quality of my efforts	3.76
9	I am satisfied with my current position	3.86
10	I relate well with my team-members/subordinates	4.48

Survey Questions:

Are you a project manager or a team member?

Answer Choices	Responses
Project Manager	33.33% 7
Team Member	66.67% 14

16

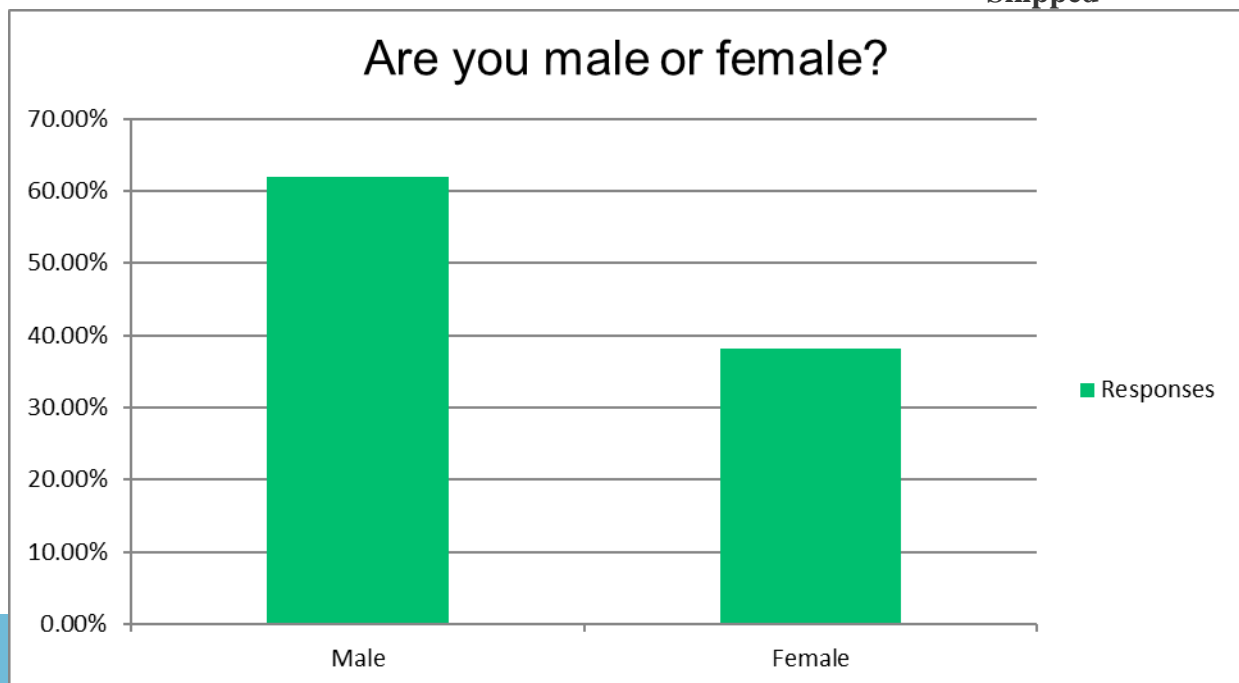
Answered 21
Skipped 0



Are you male or female?

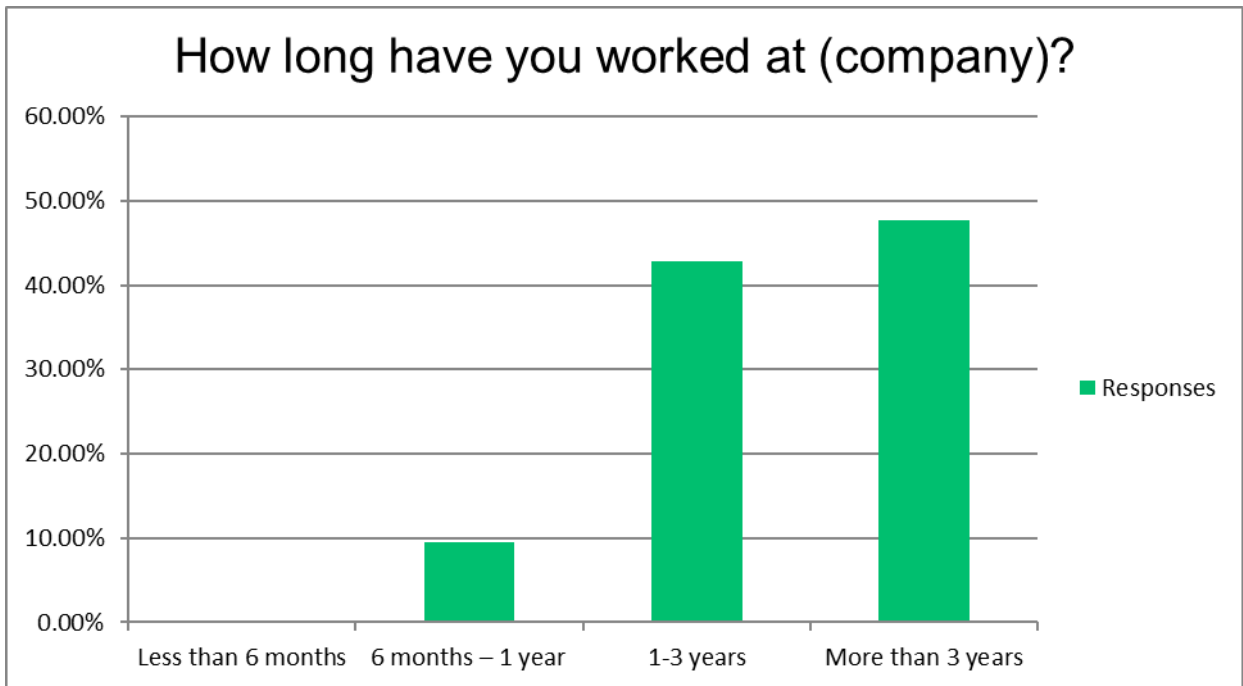
Answer Choices	Responses
Male	61.90%
Female	38.10%

Answered
Skipped



How long have you worked at (company)?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than 6 months	0.00%	0
6 months – 1 year	9.52%	2
1-3 years	42.86%	9
More than 3 years	47.62%	10
Answered		21
Skipped		0



What is your role in Information Technology team?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	0.00%	0
Project Manager	33.33%	7
Business Analyst	14.29%	3
Tester	0.00%	0
Programmer	47.62%	10
		18

Other

4.76%

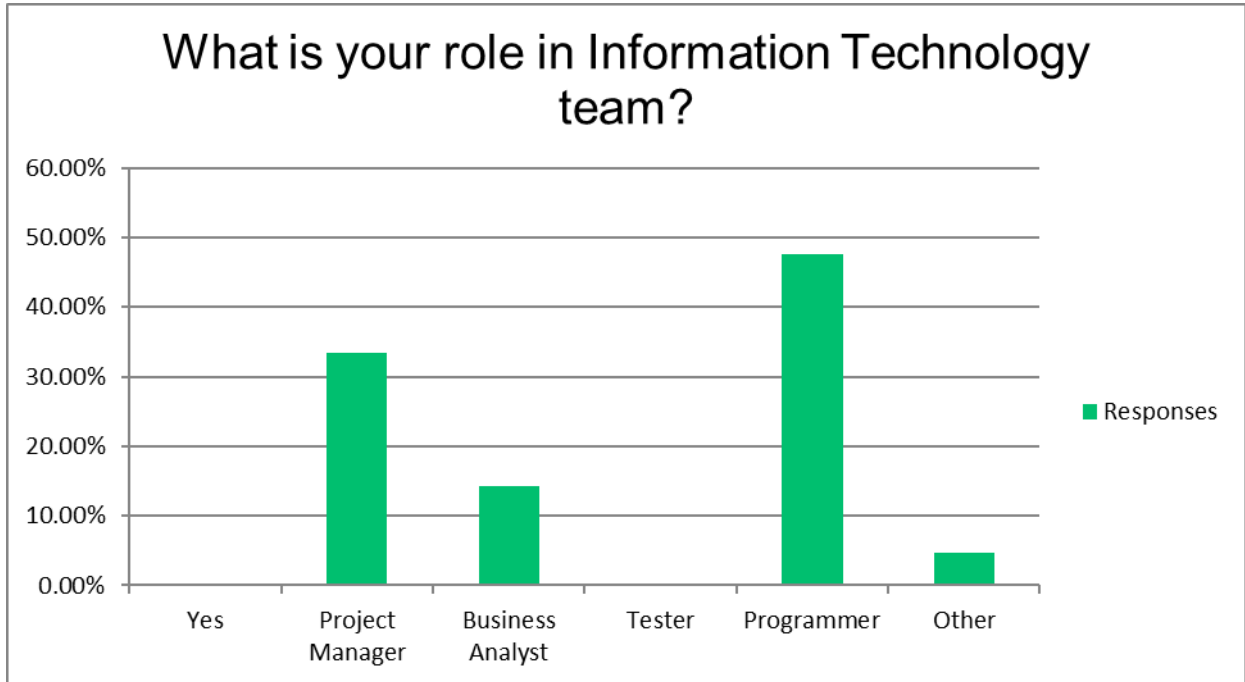
1

Answered

21

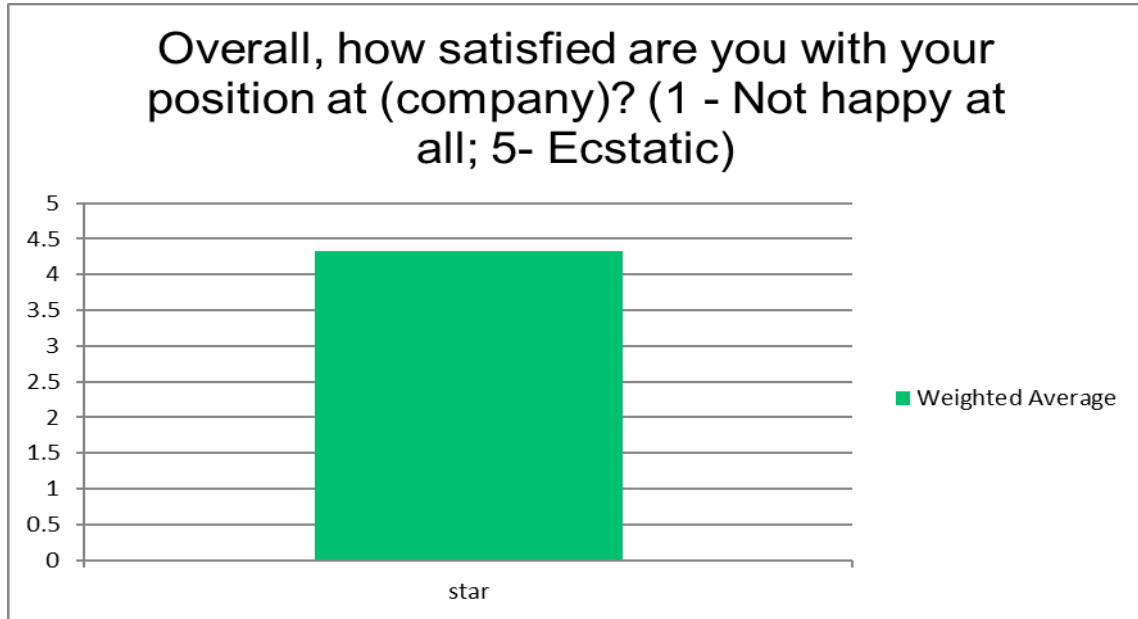
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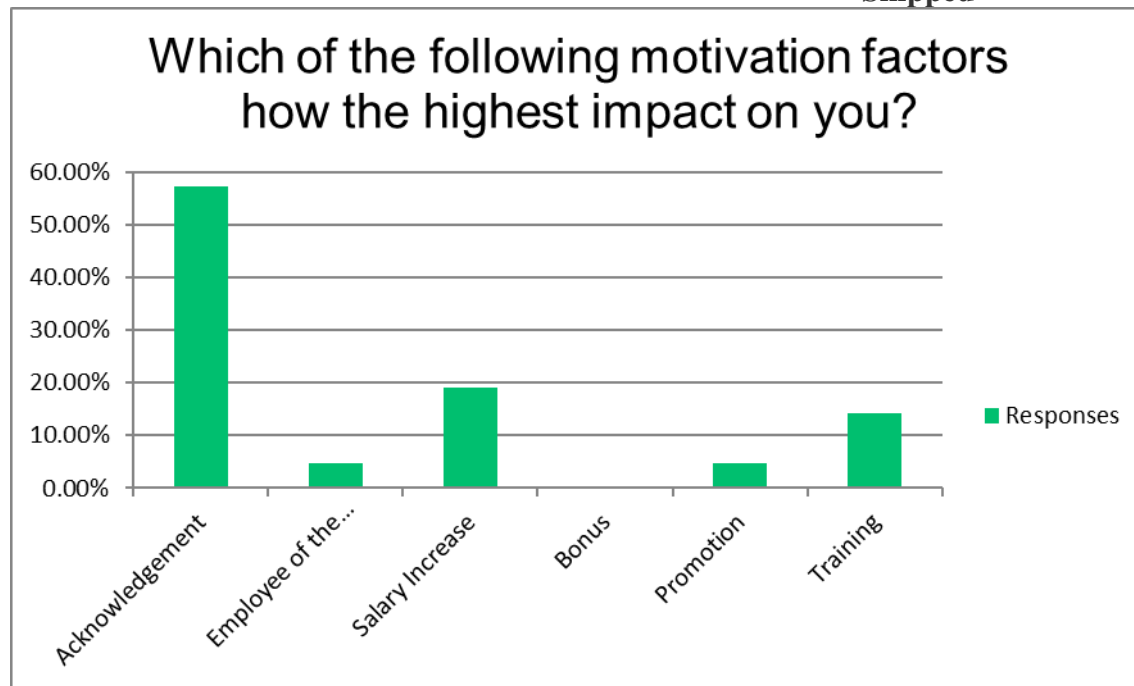
Overall, how satisfied are you with your position at (company)? (1 - Not happy at all; 5- Ecstatic)

	1	2	3	4	5	Total	Weighted Average					
star	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.76%	1	57.14%	12	38.10%	8	21	4.33
											Answered	21
											Skipped	0



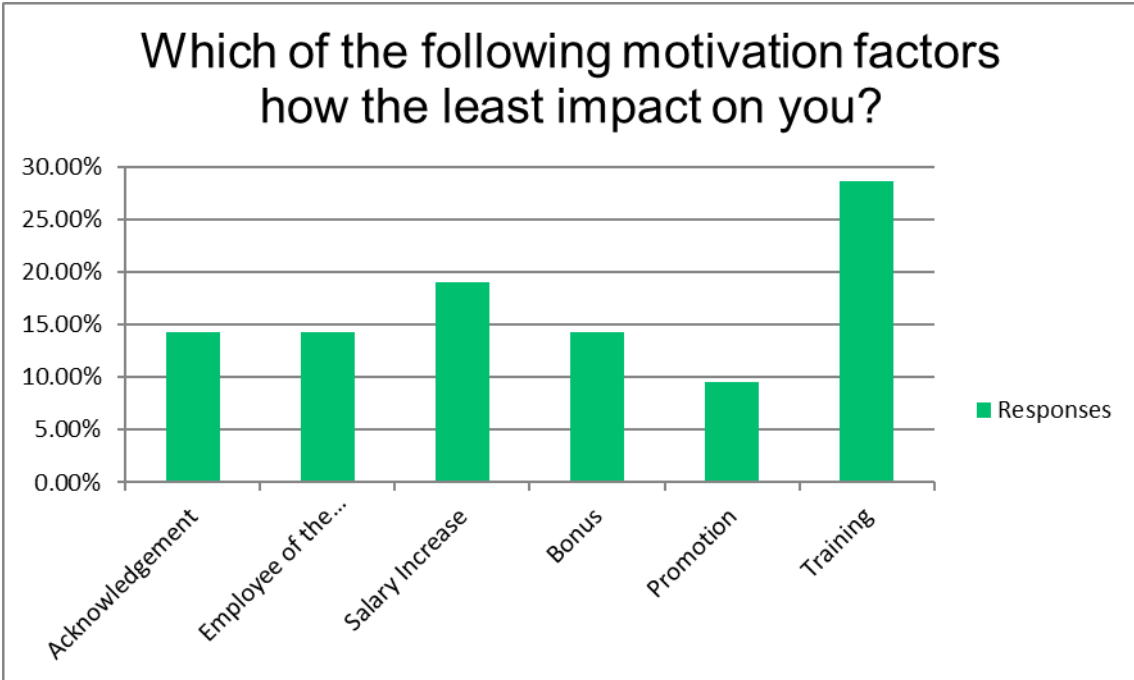
Which of the following motivation factors how the highest impact on you?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Acknowledgement	57.14%	12
Employee of the Month/Year	4.76%	1
Salary Increase	19.05%	4
Bonus	0.00%	0
Promotion	4.76%	1
Training	14.29%	3
Answered		21
Skipped		0



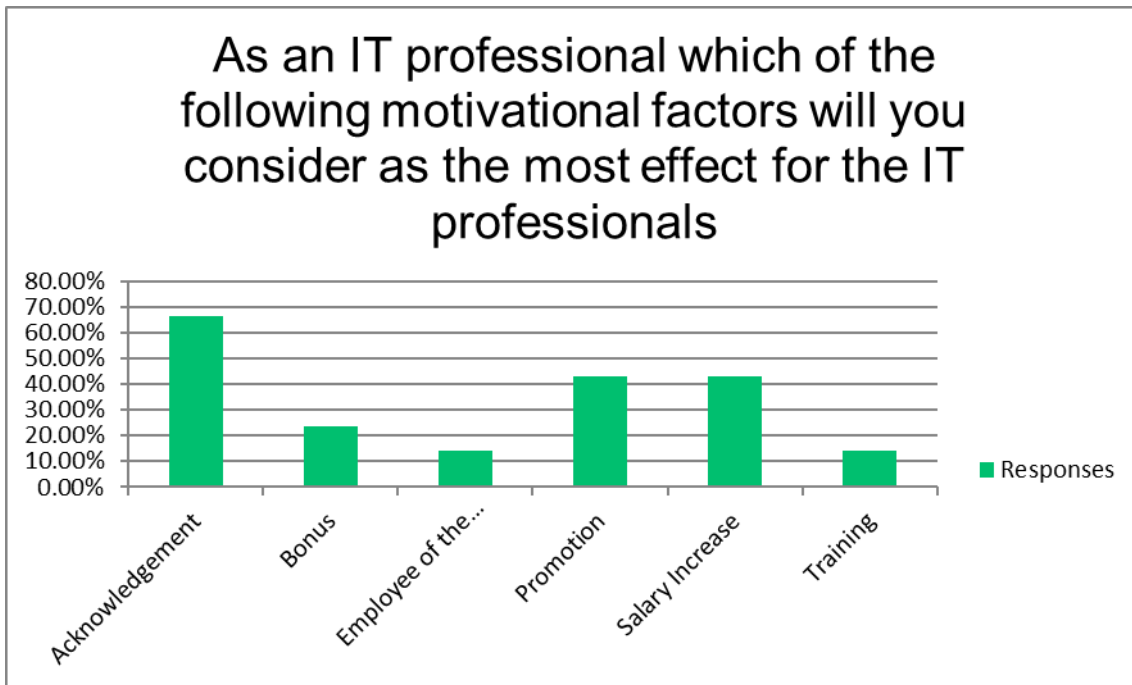
Which of the following motivation factors how the least impact on you?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Acknowledgement	14.29%	3
Employee of the Month/Year	14.29%	3
Salary Increase	19.05%	4
Bonus	14.29%	3
Promotion	9.52%	2
Training	28.57%	6
Answered		21
Skipped		0

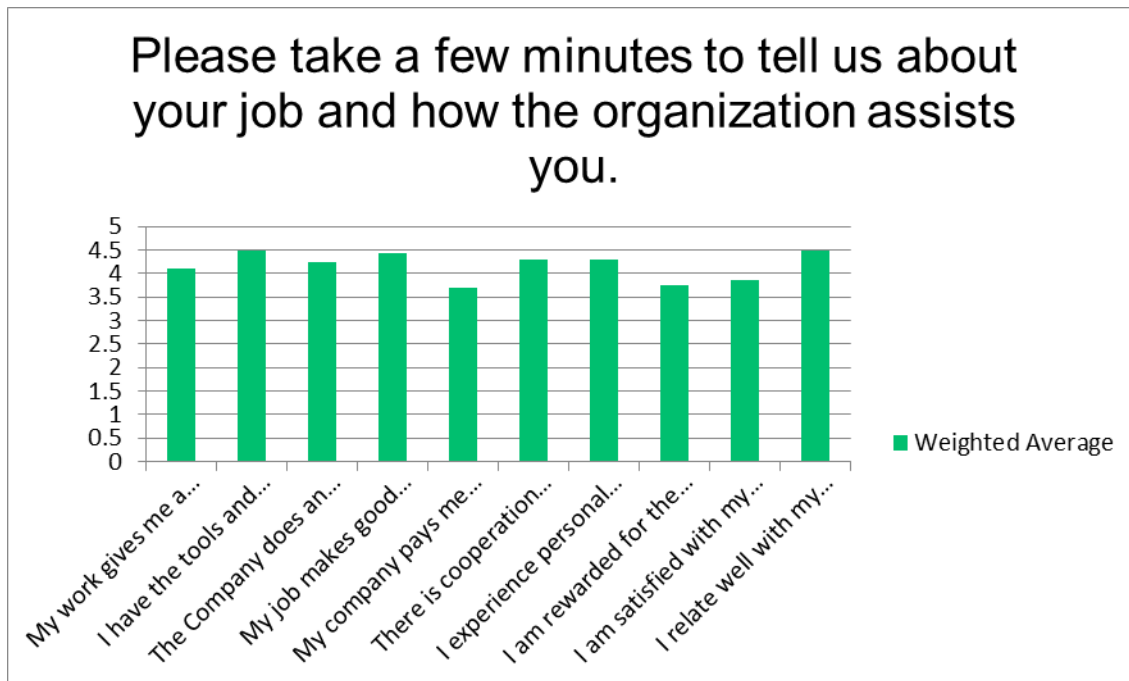


As an IT professional which of the following motivational factors will you consider as the most effect for the IT professionals

Answer Choices	Responses	
Acknowledgement	66.67%	14
Bonus	23.81%	5
Employee of the month/year	14.29%	3
Promotion	42.86%	9
Salary Increase	42.86%	9
Training	14.29%	3
Answered		21
Skipped		0

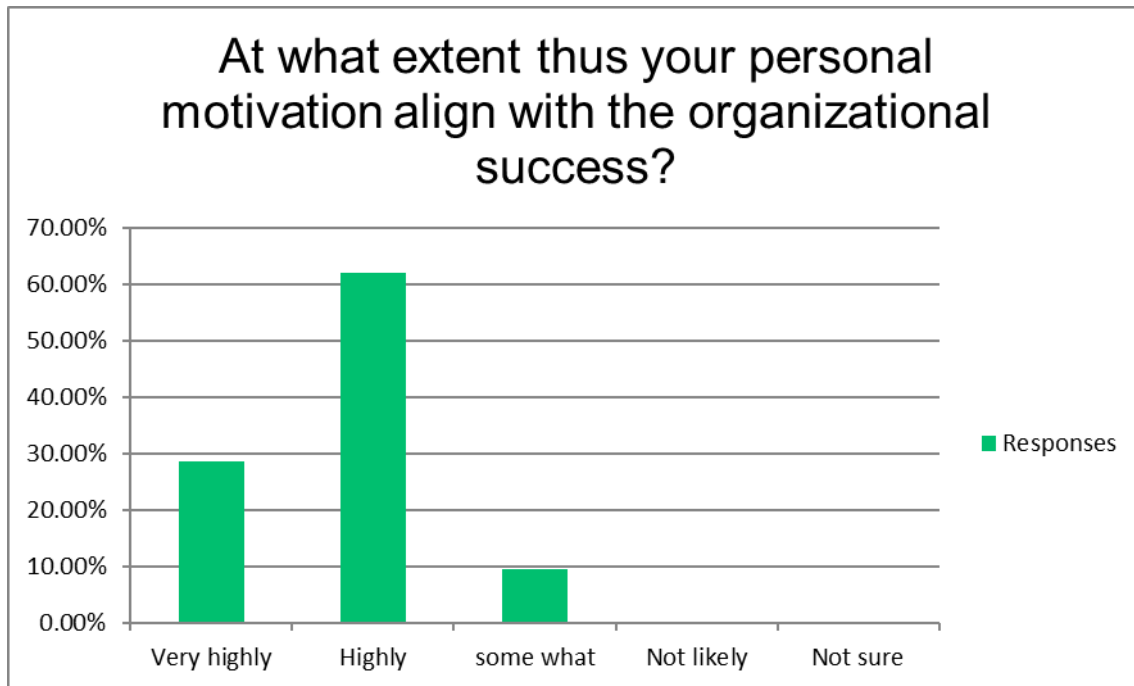


Please take a few minutes to tell us about your job and how the organization assists you.



At what extent thus your personal motivation align with the organizational success?

Answer Choices	Responses	
Very highly	28.57%	6
Highly	61.90%	13
some what	9.52%	2
Not likely	0.00%	0
Not sure	0.00%	0
Answered		21
Skipped		0



5. DISCUSSION

The extensive evaluation of the factors affecting motivation that has been conducted in this research provides a basis for a comprehensive understanding of the forces that are more potent to the motivation phenomena and how they can be applied to enhance the morale portrayed or possessed by people who work in the information and communication technology industry. The kind of work that team members of project teams in information technology firms

handle requires both discipline and creativity. Some of the morale-boosting mechanisms evaluated in the research can be applied in enhancing the creativity of the members of the information technology project teams. The two-factor theory evaluated in the literature review is an appropriate mechanism that can be utilized to improve the motivation of project team members and encourage them to be creative at the same time. The theory facilitates the creation of a free work environment and it enriches the sort of duties an individual is deployed to perform. This enhances the creativity of project team members in two dimensions. First, they have the liberty to experiment new ideas and secondly, they have their jobs designed to make optimal use of their skills.

The motivational factors discussed can also be used in instilling discipline and commitment to the project team members. The proper supervision, management method is an appropriate way of encouraging and ensuring that project team members are disciplined. The increment of salaries in the findings of the survey that substantiated that a 28.5% chance of increased motivation exists in the upgrading of salaries can also be used to encourage commitment. The motivational factors discussed in this research can be of great help in the formulation of solutions to counter the challenges faced from the reduced levels of morale that have become common for people working in the information and communication technology industry. The performance of individual team members has the potency to affect the overall performance of the entire project team. The research self-efficacy motivational theory and how it can be effectively applied in increasing the morale of specific individuals in the project team. Motivation is a key factor in determining the performance of an employee. Therefore, the

findings of this research will upgrade both the motivation of an organization's workforce and its overall performance.

6. CONCLUSION

An employee motivation is a critical issue to be considered by the organization because the performance of the entire organization is dependent on it. This research has demonstrated the immense impact that motivation has on the success of project teams in the information and communication technology industry. The extensive literature research and survey conducted do provide a deeper insight into the phenomenon of motivation and the techniques that can be used by project team managers to enhance the motivation and eventually the performance of project team members. Tabassi, Ramli & Bakar (2011) highlighted in the paper that a "companies' productivity is strongly correlated with policies and practices in training and motivating their staff and workforce" para 21. Therefore, companies in the information and communication technology sector are encouraged to motivation level increment strategies that will enhance the productivity of both employees and the entire organization. Some of the techniques that were substantiated to increase the motivation of project team members include the creation of a liberal workplace environment and the modification of duties to suit the skills and qualification of each project team member. Additionally, Menon et al. (2008) emphasize in the paper that "employees showed high levels of motivation and identified intrinsic and extrinsic sources of motivation and positive and negative characteristics of supervision" para 4. This implies that managers should engage appropriate supervision techniques in order to derive the best levels of productivity from their project team members. Project team managers in the information and communication

technology industry could also improve the motivation of their subordinates by giving them more realistic targets. The self-efficacy theory, Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and the two-factor theory were evaluated and described in a manner that can aid project team managers to enhance the morale of their teams. The two-factor was portrayed in a more useful manner by Sandhya & Kumar (2011) who indicated that the organizations "could motivate employees by adopting a democratic approach to management and by improving the nature and content of the actual job". The adherence to these theories and management strategies will yield better benefits for project team managers in the information technology industry as far as the motivation of their subordinates is concerned. The survey, conducted provided a deeper understanding of the sort of human resource actions that can be used to increase morale. Acknowledging top performers and provision of better salaries were deemed to be the most influential morale boosters. The findings of this research can improve the overall performance and morale of project teams in the Information Technology companies.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

There are still some areas that need to be examined in order to derive more conclusive information about the phenomenon of motivation among project team members especially, in the information and communication technology sector. A lot of attention needs to be paid to the individual's role in enhancing his or her own motivation. Motivation is not only dependent on external factors, but it is also dependent on internal factors. Most of the current studies have majorly explored the external factors that influence the motivation of project team members. Future attention needs to be paid to the intrinsic factors as they are equally potent in the dictation of morale levels.

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