

# Motivation Application: The Key to Stimulating Work Productivity in Jordanian Private Universities

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Received: July 28, 2018

Accepted: August 21, 2018

Online Published: September 12, 2018

doi:10.5539/mas.v12n10p43

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/mas.v12n10p43>

## Abstract

Motivation program was found to be the most commonly applied mechanism among firms, providing employees with multiple financial or non-financial rewards. It aims at raising the employees' interest, attracting and retaining talented employees, rewarding employees based on the value they create and encourages them to work hard to achieve the goals set by organizations. The study has assessed the way motivational practices are applied as a mechanism for improving work productivity, and to establish the difference caused by gender in the application of motivation practices in Jordanian private universities. Such motivation tools have been examined, training, work conditions, rewards, promotion, and employee benefits. Quantitative approach has been applied in this study and data was obtained through a questionnaire survey. A total of 320 respondents were selected as a study sample including; professors, associate professors, assistant professors, senior lecturers, lecturer, and assistant lecturer. Additionally, 253 completed questionnaires were analyzed as a final sample using descriptive analysis and independent t-sample test performed by SPSS. Two hypotheses were developed based on literature review. The results indicate that respondents were not motivated by motivational practices applied by private universities. There was a positive relationship between motivation tools (training, financial rewards, promotion, working conditions, and employee benefits) and work productivity, and there was no significant difference caused by gender in the way motivation practices were applied. This study contributes to support the literature that's not much available on the level of application of motivation practices to the academic staff in Arab private universities particularly in Jordanian private universities. It recommends universities management to set academic staff salary based on the cost of living, labor market conditions and performance to retain talented staff and to avoid high labor turnover. Also, management should take into account the promotion practice as a motivator that may attract and retain talented academic staff. Future studies may investigate more motivation practices in the same industry or comparing Jordanian private universities with other private universities in the Middle East area based on these variables.

**Keywords:** motivation, job performance, work productivity, Jordan Private Universities

## 1. Introduction

Corporations, regardless of their nature, always seek to achieve their objectives; otherwise, the success of any enterprise may turn into more of a dream than a reality. The survival of firms in any business environment is always measured by the degree of their productivity and competitiveness (Vaiman et al., 2012; Judge, 2009). Although, their productivity depend on the commitment level of employees that is visible from their moral and attitude towards job. Therefore, firms must give a high consideration to the factors that may improve the commitment level of employees; such as, motivation (Masri, & Jaaron, 2017, Srivastava & Barmola, 2011).

The basic factors of any productive enterprise may consist of capital, land, and employees. Although, the overall success of enterprises to achieve their strategic objectives depend heavily on employees. Employees are considered as the most valuable asset within any organization. In response to this, most organizations emphasize on the construction and implementation of effective motivational program aimed at satisfying the needs of employees, so they can positively contribute to productive activities (Rawashdeh, 2018; San et al., 2012). Motivation program is found to be the most commonly applied mechanism among firms, providing employees with multiple financial or non-financial rewards. It aims at raising the employees' interest, attracting and retaining talented employees, rewarding employees based on the value they create and encourages them to work hard to achieve the goals set by organizations (Rawashdeh & Al-Adwan, 2012; Ogaboh & Ushie, 2010). The motivated employees are assumed to

be the most loyal, committed, dedicated, enthusiastic, and contented employees. The results shall contribute significantly to the high percentage of productivity i.e. geared towards the growth and development of the organization as predicted by (Forson 2012; San et al., 2012; Shanun, 2011).

There is not much literature available on the level of application of motivation practices to the academic staff in arab private universities particularly in jordanian private universities. The failure in boosting the level of motivation may bring some undesirable outcomes, such as; high staff turnover, lack of qualified teachers, lack of recruitment and selection mechanism, uncommitted staff, unclear polices in remuneration, unattractive working conditions & terms of service, and inefficient administration. These factors tend to threaten the survival of the universities, since the unmotivated employees have a huge negative impact on work productivity and on overall performance as well. Thus, most of those universities may fall short of their objectives and may fail to contribute to the national development in the expected way. Despite the significant association between motivation application and work productivity of academic staff, no study has yet been conducted to explore the interaction between these variables, particularly, the gender difference application of motivation practices of the academic staff in Jordanian private universities. A better understanding of these relationships will contribute to the theory and practice in education industry and will provide further insight regarding the impacts of motivation application on work productivity. To fill this gap of strategic importance, the current study emerged as an attempt to investigate the relationship between motivation application and work productivity in Jordanian private universities.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Motivation is known as the most essential part of the management of people. Without motivating the human resources, no organization can reach its goals and objectives. Maduka and Okafar (2014) stated that, motivation started with creating a need in human being, which in turn generates a vacuum inside them. Thus, to fill that vacuum, an internal driving force is required this, resulting in a whole action and reaction process. Consistent to this, Bawa (2017) defined motivation acts as an internal or external driving force, which enables human being to work in a manner, which helps them to gain positive outcome out of their hard work or to satisfy their needs.

Several researches have been conducted and a wide literature is being dedicated to the association between motivation and staff productivity or staff performance. Numerous studies have reported significant and positive results between the two parameters (Osabiya, 2015; Afuye et al., 2016). Motivation and productivity have become the topic of most unending debate among the theorists. Some of them defined it as the function of ability; whereas, the rest defined it as a factor to influence the productivity or performance (Upev, Chorun & Idachaba, 2015).

The key objective of organizations is how much they are concerned in adopting strategies to achieve high levels of performance with the help of their work force. To this end, organizations exploit different opportunities to keep their employees motivated by offering rewards, incentives, leadership etc. (Osabiya, 2015). Based on this, there are several other strategies, which can be used as a powerful tool to motivate individuals through setting goals and; in turn, increases the work performance of employees. Goal setting helps employees to focus on the most important parts, which specifically requires attention (GoerG, 2015). Therefore, apart from incentives and rewards, goals can be utilized as an effective tool for increasing the performance and productivity of employees.

If organizations want to reach targets and to function properly, it is essential for them to utilize their employees in the most effective way possible. Organizations must play their part to motivate their work force and also, they must respect the intrinsic motivation of their employees by respecting the differences among individuals (Stacho, Urbancová & Stachová, 2013; Hitka & Balážová, 2015). The performance of employees can be measured by assessing the effectiveness of specific actions of employees that play their part in attaining the organizational goals. Although, motivation can be regarded as a topic of concern for both the human resource management and top managers since its impact on overall organization is noteworthy (Roy &Khastagir, 2016; Tomo & Todisco, 2018). However, the HR management and the top leaders are continuously faced with challenges; such as, lack of innovative ideas related to motivating their employees (Tomo & Todisco, 2018).

In the competitive corporate environment, organizations seek to increase the level of performance and the motivation level of their employees; therefore, to achieve this goal they adopt several strategies to boost the morale of their work force. Despite the firm of resources, it is the human resource that plays a major role in achieving the desired goals and positive performance of any organization (Nguyen, 2017). With regard to this, it becomes very important for organizations to keep their employees motivated by providing them personal growth, work-life balance, incentives, rewards, money etc. (Huyen, 2017).

Based on the aforementioned literature, this study provides the following hypotheses:

H0: There is an insignificant and negative relationship between motivation tools & gender on the

productivity/performance of employees in Jordanian private universities.

H1: There is a significant and positive relationship between motivation tools & gender on the productivity/performance of employees in Jordanian private universities.

### 3. Method

This study has taken into account Jordanian private universities due to the direct impact of academic staff members on the image of the university. It holds significance because results will help universities to improve their performance in the education marketplace. A questionnaire survey was administered among the sample to elicit primary data. The study consists of eight private universities located in the capital Amman. Purposive and stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting 320 respondents from the population.

A total of 279 questionnaires were received until the end of survey and after in-depth analysis 26 questionnaires were found to be unfit for analysis. Therefore, a total of 253 questionnaires were used as the study sample. Data was collected from respondents using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). SPSS was then used to analyze the data. The questionnaire was divided into three segments. Segment A, consisted of the bio-data of respondents. On the other hand, segment B collected data regarding motivation practices (training, work conditions, rewards, promotion, and employee benefits); segment C tackle questions on work productivity (satisfaction, turnover, absenteeism and employee performance). The items used in this study were adapted from different studies (Nguyen, 2017; Hitka& Balázová, 2015; Osabiya, 2015; Edabu & Anumaka, 2014; Ogaboh & Ushie, 2010; Shanun, 2011). Cronbach’s Alpha was used to test the internal consistency of the instrument, the values ranged from 0.72-0.85. The reliability of all constructs of the instrument is above 70%, and the total reliability of the survey is above 81% which is considered as excellent (Vogt., 1999).

### 4. Results

Table 1. Scale determine the relative importance of the mean

The level of the effect	The mean
Low	2.33 and less
Medium	2.34 – 3.67
High	3.68 – 5

These categories were derived according to the following equation:

$$\text{Interval length} = \frac{\text{Highest weight} - \text{lowest weight}}{\text{Three levels}} = \frac{5-1}{3} = 1.33$$

Table 2. The mean and standard deviation for the use of motivation tools in Jordanian private universities

Category	Mean	Std. Dev.	Level
Training	2.53	1.21	Medium
Financial Rewards	2.24	1.13	Low
Promotion	2.18	0.86	Low
Working conditions	2.47	1.17	Medium
Employee benefits	2.12	1.03	Low
Motivation practices	2.30	1.08	low
Satisfaction	2.26	1.17	low
Turnover	3.60	0.98	Medium
Absenteeism	2.35	1.04	low
Employee performance	3.48	1.16	Medium
Work productivity	2.92	1.08	Medium

Table 3. The correlation between survey items

	Training	Rewards	Promotion	Working conditions	Employee benefit	Work productivity
Training	1	0.63**	0.58**	0.72**	0.60**	0.76**
Rwawards		1	0.53**	0.67**	0.66**	0.51**
Promotion			1	0.64**	0.70**	0.55**
Working conditions				1	0.63**	0.84**
Employee benefits					1	0.56**
Work productivity						1

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4. Multiple linear regression analysis to test the relationship between motivation tools and work productivity in Jordanian private universities

Variable	F	Sig (f)	T	Sig(t)	$\alpha$	B	Decision on Ho
Training			2.04	0.012		0.224	Rejected
Financial rewards			6.42	0.008		0.410	Rejected
Promotion	93.34	0.000	- 0.96	0.024	0.861	0.186	Rejected
Working conditions			- 1.25	0.041		0.241	Rejected
Employee benefits			1.07	0.018		0.182	Rejected

(Level of significance = 0.05)

Table 5. Independent t-sample test results for no significant difference caused by gender in the way motivation tools are applied in Jordanian private universities

Measures	Gender	Mean	t- value	Sig(t)	Decision
Motivation tools	Male	2.36	1.48	0.27	Accepted
	Female	2.31			

(Level of significance = 0.05)

Data was analyzed through descriptive statistical methods with percentages, mean, Pearson, T test and Regression. The socio-demographic information regarding qualification, rank, gender, age, years of service in the university, and the number of universities served were obtained. The data showed that 79% of the respondents were Ph.D. and 21% were Master's degree holders. Furthermore, 17% were Professors, 25% were Associate Professors, 44% were Assistant Professors and 14% were lecturers. Moreover, the sample consisted of 76% males, (24% females 9% married and 15% single). 24% respondents were above 50 years, 61% were between 35-50 years and 15% were below 35 years. Educational experience was also recorded, which showed that 72% of the respondents served their university for 0-5 years, 20% served for 5-12 years, and only 8% served for above 12 years. It was also found that, 6% of the respondents never changed their workplace, 32% changed their workplace once, while 62% changed their workplace more than once.

Table 2 reflected the mean scores on the level of motivation practices used in Jordanian private universities as a mechanism for encouraging academic staff to perform their job. The results of descriptive statistics indicated general agreement of the respondents' on motivation practices. The total implementation of motivation practices is 2.30, which is considered as a low level. The mean values of motivation practices ranged from highest 2.53 to lowest 2.12. The results for training indicated highest conformity (Mean =2.53, Standard Deviation =1.21); and employee benefits as lower indicator (Mean = 2.12, Standard Deviation = 1.03). The mean score and standard deviation reflected conformity of respondents' perception about these items. A perusal through the means showed that the levels of financial rewards, promotion, and employee benefits were as low as the score below 2.33 while the levels of training and working conditions were as medium as the scores above 2.33.

To test the study hypotheses Pearson's correlation coefficient and multiple linear regression analysis were used. Table 3 indicates that there was a positive correlation between work productivity and the fifth tools of motivation, as the strongest correlation is with working conditions tool ( $p=0.84$ ), while the weakest correlation is with rewards tool ( $p=0.51$ ). To test the correlation among motivation tools, also Table 3 indicates a significant correlation with each other, as the strongest correlation is between "training " and "working conditions" ( $p=0.72$ ), while the weakest correlation is between "rewards " and "promotion" ( $p=0.53$ ). These correlations can be considered as positively strong since all of the Pearson's correlation coefficient values are above ( $p=0.50$ ). Furthermore, Table 4 shows results regarding training ( $t=2.04$ ,  $sig=0.012$ ); financial rewards ( $t=6.42$ ,  $sig=0.008$ ); promotion ( $t=-0.96$ ,  $sig=0.024$ ); working conditions ( $t=-1.25$ ,  $sig=0.041$ ) and employee benefits ( $t=1.07$ ,  $sig=0.018$ ). The values of significance level related to T values were less than 0.05, suggesting the presence of a positive relationship. With regards to this, the null hypothesis has been rejected that stated, there is no positive relationship between motivation tools (training, financial rewards, promotion, working condition and employee benefits) and work productivity at 5% level of significance. On the other hand, alternative hypothesis has been accepted that stated a positive relationship between the motivation tools (training, financial rewards, promotion, working

conditions, and employee benefits) and work productivity.

Table 5 showed that motivation tools value ( $t= 1.48$ ,  $sig= 0.27$ ) is greater than  $\alpha= 0.05$ , then at 5% level of significance, the null hypothesis will be accepted and the alternative hypothesis will be rejected. There was no significant difference caused by gender in the way motivation practices were applied in Jordanian private universities. Further, the mean scores presented in Table 5 suggest that males (mean = 2.36) were better than females (mean = 2.31) at motivation tools.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study showed a positive influence of motivation tools on work productivity. The academic staff showed low motivation as the mean average was 2.30. The findings demonstrated that motivation tools; such as, financial rewards, promotion and employee benefits offered in the private universities were not motivated; however, the motivation tools including training and working conditions were found to be fair. These findings were in consistent with the findings of (Edabu & Anumaka, 2014; Ogaboh & Ushie, 2010; Shanun, 2011; Gabriella, 2005; Akintoye, 2000), who concluded that motivational tools affect employees work productivity in any industry. Furthermore, the respondents acknowledged the impact of salary/wage on work productivity. most of the private universities did not pay adequate salaries to their academic staff i.e. based on qualification, rank, experience, country of graduation, university etc., but rather on individual bargaining power. This behavior complements the beliefs of academic staff that private universities did not have a clear policy for recruitment and payment as well. Numerous studies in the field of motivation confirmed that money is still one of the deterrent motivators (Anon, 2004; Shaemi et al., 2011). This shows that some private universities with poor remuneration for academic staff are more pertinent to losing their qualified staff members to well-paid universities. It is pronounced that the high turnover of academic staff in private universities is a function of poor salary paid to them.

According to Logan (2008), poor salary/wage is a significant motivator that triggers many individuals to leave their workplace for a better paying workplace. Financial rewards are a base for high productivity; therefore, small businesses with poor rewards fail to compete with their bigger counterpart and fall short of their goal, eventually losing their talented work force. Business should; therefore, improve employee motivation by linking payment and work productivity. Even if the motivation mechanism is adopted effectively, money still plays as a deterrent motivator for staff. The finding concludes that, remuneration of academic staff is a very crucial tool to stimulate work productivity in private universities. In reference to employee benefits, the study revealed that employee benefits applied to academic staff in these private universities were not motivated. The findings also revealed that, private universities did not allow their academic staff to go on sabbatical leave or long emergency leave, and they prefer single women for employment so that maternal leaves will not become an issue.

Armstrong (2006) also confirmed that staffing policy of firms should consider the significance of benefits as a motivator. This is because the employees are not restricted to only one firm and switch quickly if they are not given satisfactory benefits. Kepner (2001) also stated that, fringe benefits are critical in employees' productivity and turnover in formal firms i.e. employees always move to firms that offer better benefits. Based on the aforementioned finding, private universities must take into consideration employee benefits as a motivation tool that may improve their performance and in turn achieving competitive advantage. In a similar scenario, the study revealed that promotion practice was not enough motivated. Most respondents stated that, they are hardly promoted and it was not based on job description. Some respondents stressed that they had moved from their former university to a new one due to lack of promotion. Other respondents acknowledged that, they stayed because they could not find a better opportunity. In general, most respondents confirmed that all private universities are the same in motivation practices with a fewer differences. The study concludes that employee's promotion was crucial in enhancing work productivity among academic staff.

Accordingly, private universities should take into account promotion practice as a motivator that may attract and retain talented professors. Concerning training, it has registered fair scores which allude to low motivation in all private universities indicating that the universities under consideration had no policy on training their academic staff. In the studies of motivation, training function has shown concrete evidence as a significant motivator and is still positively associated with work productivity of employees. In the same way, the study concludes that training is very crucial for academic staff to improve their performance. Hence, every university management need to invest in training activities to provide their staff with education, skills and expertise that may affect the overall performance and competitiveness. The study further reveals that working conditions indicated fair scores, which allude to low motivation. Most respondents acknowledged that safety and security policies were not provided by their universities. Every university management is advised to adopt a clear policy regarding staff insurance policy, health insurance, and other insurance amenities. Furthermore, university management should provide academic

staff with the required security procedures to improve the quality of education. Finally, the findings revealed that no significant difference was caused by gender in the way motivation tools are applied in Jordanian private universities. This means that the values in motivation tools for the two sexes did not differ significantly, and the universities management were dealing with the two sexes on equality basis in respect to motivation practices. The above finding was in concurrence with the findings of (Edabu & Anumaka, 2014; Nelson, 2001).

The lack of motivation application was found to be prominent in Jordanian private universities. As shown in the study, there exists a linear relationship between motivation tools (Training, Financial rewards, Promotion, Working conditions, Employee benefits) and work productivity in Jordanian private universities. Furthermore, the lack of motivation application affects the goal attainment in universities. Also, the study revealed that there was no significant difference caused by gender in the way motivation tools are applied in Jordanian private universities. Accordingly, the study recommends university management to adopt S.O.P (Slandered Operating Procedures) or Manual Policies concerning staff remuneration, welfare and other financial benefits. The salary should be adapted based on the cost of living, labor market conditions and performance to retain talented staff and avoid high labor turnover. Also, it's recommended to implement a variety of awards such as the best researcher award, the best research group award, participation in outside international conferences, and double point early promotion to strengthen staff performance that may benefit them and their university as well. Future studies may investigate more motivation practices in the same industry or comparing Jordanian private universities with other private universities in the Middle East area based on these variables.

### Acknowledgement

The author is very thankful to all the associated personnel in any reference that contributed in/for the purpose of this research.

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