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Cultivating Intrinsic Motivation in Employees

A comparative analysis of supervisor strategies in
small enterprises and large corporations

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DECLARATION

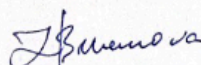
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1. Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving work environments, maintaining employee motivation is both a critical challenge and a strategic priority for organizations of all sizes. While traditional approaches to motivation have often emphasized external incentives such as bonuses, promotions, or formal recognition programs, there is a growing body of research and practical understanding that highlights the deeper importance of internal or intrinsic motivation. This refers to the drive to engage in work because it is interesting, fulfilling or personally meaningful, rather than for external rewards alone (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Intrinsic motivation has been strongly associated with improved job performance, higher levels of creativity, increased engagement and a greater overall employee well-being (Gagné & Deci, 2005). As a result, cultivating this form of motivation has become a key objective not only for human resource departments but also for supervisors and leaders working directly with teams. However, the ways in which intrinsic motivation is supported can vary widely depending on the organizational context and leadership approach.

This thesis investigated the following research question: How do supervisor strategies for cultivation intrinsic motivation differ between small enterprises and large corporations?

The central aim of this research is to explore and compare the strategies supervisors use to support intrinsic motivation in employees within two distinct organizational environments: small enterprises and large corporations. By examining these differences, the study seeks to provide practical insights that can inform leadership practices and improve employee engagement across a range of workplace settings.

Although motivation has been examined through a wide range of theoretical lenses, including psychological, behavioral and organizational frameworks, there remains a significant gap in our understanding of how supervisors specifically contribute to intrinsic motivation in real world workplaces. Moreover, relatively few studies have compared motivation; strategies across organizations of different sizes, despite the fact that company structure can dramatically shape the nature of supervisory relationships.

I chose this topic out of longstanding interest in what makes people feel truly engaged and fulfilled in their work. Through academic research, case studies and personal observation, I came to see that the supervisor-employee relationship is a central factor in how motivation is experienced. In smaller organizations, supervisors may engage more personally and frequently with their teams, enabling a more individualized and relational style of leadership. In contrast, larger organizations often feature more formalized processes, greater role specialization and stricter hierarchies, all of which may affect how motivation is managed and expressed (Mintzberg, 1983).

At the same time, intrinsic motivation can be difficult to cultivate and sustain. Poorly designed reward systems, lack of recognition, limited autonomy and bureaucratic constraints can all undermine employees' internal drive (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Supervisors must also navigate practical challenges such as time constraints, limited resources, and competing organizational priorities, all of which may vary depending on the size and complexity of the company.

To investigate these dynamics, I conducted a quantitative survey targeting employees from both small enterprises and large corporations. The purpose was to gather data on how employees perceive their supervisors' efforts to support intrinsic motivation and to identify any significant patterns, differences or similarities across organizational types. A quantitative approach enabled a broader analysis of employee perceptions and allowed for the identification of trends across a larger, more diverse sample.

The first chapter of this thesis reviews key literature on intrinsic motivation, supervisory influence and organizational structure. It draws on foundational theories such as Self-Determination Theory and Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, while also examining empirical studies that highlight how leadership and motivation interact in different workplace environments. This literature review establishes the research gap and provides a theoretical framework for interpreting the study's findings.

The methodology chapter outlines the design and administration of the survey, describes the sample, and details the analytical tool used. The results are presented with the aim of uncovering actionable insights into how supervisors in different contexts approach intrinsic motivation. These findings are then discussed in relation to the literature, with the goal of

offering practical recommendations for leaders seeking to create more motivating and meaningful workplaces.

Ultimately, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how organizational context shapes leadership practices and motivational outcomes. By comparing supervisor strategies across small and large companies, this thesis aims to inform both academic theory and leadership practice, helping organizations of all sizes foster stronger, more intrinsically motivated teams.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

According to Robbins and Judge (2019), workplace motivation has become a crucial component in improving worker performance, job satisfaction and overall organizational effectiveness. It is becoming more widely acknowledged that intrinsic motivation, which is the inner drive that propels people to pursue success, personal growth and the satisfaction of inner desires, has a greater impact on modern society and workplaces than extrinsic motivators like monetary compensation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Pink, 2009). In this sense managers have a significant influence on how the workplace is shaped by putting different tactics into practice that are meant to encourage employees' intrinsic motivation (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

Even though the ideas of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and their applicability in the workplace have been the subject of much research, there is still a dearth of literature comparing the motivational methods used by supervisors, especially when comparing large and small businesses. The development of intrinsic motivation is closely related to supervisory behavior, communication dynamics and employee recognition opportunities, all of which are significantly impacted by organizational size (Luthans, 2011; Armstrong, 2014).

2.2. Key Concepts and Definitions

2.2.1. Motivation in the Workplace

Motivation in the workplace is widely recognized as a fundamental concept in understanding employee behavior and performance (Armstrong, 2014). Robbins and Judge (2019) conceptualize motivation as a process involving the intensity, direction and persistence of an individual's effort toward achieving a specific goal. This perspective emphasizes not only the amount of effort exerted but also where that effort is directed and how consistently it is maintained. Luthans (2011) similarly views motivation as a psychological mechanism that initiates, guides and sustains goal-oriented actions. Armstrong (2014) highlights the behavioral dimension, focusing on how the strength and direction of behavior are influenced by various factors. From a more content-based standpoint, Herzberg's (1959) two-factor

theory suggests that intrinsic elements of a job such as achievement and recognition play a more significant role in fostering motivation and satisfaction than extrinsic elements.

In the context of this research, the definition offered by Robbins and Judge (2019) is particularly relevant, as it captures the dynamic and multifaceted nature of motivation. This definition aligns well with the study's focus on how supervisors influence motivation through leadership practices and workplace conditions.

2.2.2. Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Motivation is commonly categorized into intrinsic and extrinsic types. Intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in work because it is inherently interesting, fulfilling or personally meaningful. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is driven by external incentives or consequences, such as financial compensation, rewards or avoidance of penalties (Pink, 2009).

According to Deci and Ryan (2000), intrinsic motivation arises when individuals perform tasks for the inherent satisfaction they derive, rather than for external rewards. Ryan and Deci (1985) further emphasize that intrinsically motivated individuals are guided by the challenge and enjoyment of the task itself. Amabile (1996) supports this view, noting that people are intrinsically motivated when their engagement stems from the interest and enjoyment of the activity. From a more contemporary perspective, Pink (2009) emphasizes the significance of autonomy, mastery and purpose in driving intrinsic motivation.

Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is tied to outcomes that are separate from the activity, such as monetary rewards or recognition. Herzberg (1959) classified these external factors, like salary, job security and company policies as hygiene factors which may prevent dissatisfaction but are insufficient to enhance motivation significantly on their own.

This thesis adopts Deci and Ryan's (2000) conceptualization of intrinsic motivation, as it provides a robust theoretical foundation through Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT explains motivation in terms of the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness. This framework is particularly valuable for understanding how supervisors can structure the work environment to support or inhibit intrinsic motivation.

2.2.3. Managerial Strategies for Fostering Intrinsic Motivation

Supervisors play a central role in shaping the conditions that either promote or hinder intrinsic motivation in the workplace. Their leadership style, the nature of their communication, the type of feedback they provide and their investment in employee development all significantly influence motivational outcomes (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

Research has shown that supervisors who foster autonomy by allowing employees discretion over how they carry out their work, can enhance intrinsic motivation. Providing meaningful, constructive feedback that supports learning and skill development also contributes to employees' sense of competence and ownership over their tasks. Recognition of individual contributions fosters a sense of value and purpose, which can deepen employees' engagement with their work (Deci et al., 1989).

Supporting employees' growth, both personally and professionally, is another key strategy. Supervisors who offer development opportunities, through mentoring, training or challenging assignments, demonstrate trust and a commitment to employee advancement. Furthermore, when day-to-day tasks are linked to larger organizational goals, employees often experience a greater sense of meaning, which can amplify their motivation (Amabile & Kramer, 2011).

2.2.4. Defining Small and Large Enterprises

Distinction between small enterprises and large corporations go beyond workforce size to include structural, cultural and managerial differences that can impact how motivation is cultivated (Dandridge, 1979).

According to the European Commission (2020), small enterprises are defined as those employing fewer than 50 individuals. These organizations typically feature flatter hierarchies, more informal communication channels and closer relationships between supervisors and staff. Such environments often allow for more personalized and flexible approaches to employee motivation, potentially making it easier to meet individual needs and foster intrinsic motivation.

Conversely, large corporations, commonly defined as those with 250 or more employees, are characterized by more complex structures, formalized procedures and hierarchical systems of management (Luthans, 2011). While direct supervisor-employee interactions may be less frequent in these settings, larger forms often have access to more extensive resources. These can include structured training programs, formal performance evaluation systems and clearly defined career progression paths, all of which can contribute to intrinsic motivation if implemented effectively (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Understanding how these organizational contexts shape supervisory strategies is essential for addressing the central research question of this thesis: how do supervisor strategies for cultivating intrinsic motivation differ between small enterprises and large corporations?

2.3. Theoretical Framework on Intrinsic Motivation

Numerous theoretical frameworks shed light on intrinsic motivation, especially in professional contexts. These ideas aid in the comprehension of how people derive fulfillment, engagement and purpose from their job. The Job Characteristics Model (JCM), Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) are three well-known ideas in this field. Every theory presents a different angle on how to promote intrinsic motivation emphasizing elements like psychological fulfillment, autonomy, purpose and work design (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

2.3.1. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and its role in workplace motivation

According to Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the satisfaction of three fundamental psychological needs, autonomy, competence and relatedness, is what propels intrinsic motivation. The capacity to make decisions on one's own is known as autonomy; feeling competent and successful at work is known as competence; and having deep social ties with coworkers is known as relatedness. When these requirements are satisfied at work, workers are more engaged, productive and satisfied with their jobs (Deci, Olafsen & Ryan, 2017). According to studies, companies that support these demands have more motivated employees, which lowers turnover and improves performance (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Additionally, SDT argues that external incentives might occasionally weaken

internal drive, emphasizing the value of intrinsic motivation above extrinsic rewards (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

2.3.2. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory: Motivation vs. Hygiene Factors

Introduced in 1959, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory makes a distinction between hygiene elements, which avoid dissatisfaction and motivators, which promote job satisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959). Intrinsic motivators include things like accomplishments, approval, reliability and potential for advancement. By giving labour significance and fulfillment, these components improve intrinsic motivation (Herzberg, 1966). Conversely, hygienic factors like salaries, job stability and working conditions can lead to displeasure if they are insufficient but may not always boost motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2019).

There are important consequences for workplace motivation from the hypothesis. Instead of depending just on pay raises and benefits, employers who want to boost intrinsic motivation can concentrate on offering meaningful work and possibilities for promotion (Sachau, 2007). According to research, workers are more likely to exhibit higher levels of motivation and engagement if they believe their work is valuable and related to their own development (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). True motivation comes from achieving psychological and professional goals, even while hygienic considerations are crucial for preserving employee pleasure. Therefore, in order to optimize intrinsic motivation, firms should create jobs that include aspects of responsibility, professional advancement and acknowledgment (Sachau, 2007).

2.3.3. Job Characteristics Model (JCM) and Intrinsic Motivation

Hackman and Oldham (1976) created the Job Characteristics Model (JCM), which outlines five essential job features that improve intrinsic motivation: self-determination, feedback, task relevance, task identity and skill variation. Higher motivation, performance and work satisfaction are the ultimate outcomes of these dimensions' effect in three psychological states: awareness of results, perceived meaningfulness and experienced responsibility (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

The usefulness of JCM in increasing intrinsic motivation is supported by research. Employee satisfaction and motivation are generally higher in jobs that integrate these five characteristics (Humphrey, Nahrgang & Morgenson, 2007). By creating positions that optimize these qualities, companies may use JCM to make sure workers find their job to be purposeful and rewarding. This model offers a methodical approach to job design, stressing the value of working environments that promote long-term job engagement and intrinsic motivation (Fried & Ferris, 1987).

2.4. Empirical Studies on Intrinsic Motivation

2.4.1. Summary of Key Findings

Over the last few decades, intrinsic motivation has been widely studied in organizational psychology and management literature. Numerous empirical studies confirm that intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in enhancing employee engagement, innovation and organizational commitment (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Amabile, 1996; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Research grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) consistently finds that intrinsic motivation is strongest when employees experience autonomy, competence and relatedness in their work environment. Deci et al. (1989) conducted a foundational field study in a corporate setting that demonstrated how managerial support for autonomy leads to higher intrinsic motivation, while supportive and empowering settings strengthen it.

Amabile et al. (1994), using daily diaries in multiple organizations, observed that employees are more motivated and creative on days when they perceive progress in meaningful work - underscoring the value of internal satisfaction over external incentives. Further, Kuvaas (2006) found that trust in supervisors and non-controlling performance feedback significantly correlated with intrinsic motivation among knowledge workers.

In sum, the literature highlights consistent findings across different organizational contexts: employees are more intrinsically motivated when they have autonomy, receive supportive

feedback and find purpose in their work (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

2.4.2. Impact on Performance and Job Satisfaction

Empirical studies have shown a clear link between intrinsic motivation and positive work outcomes, including both individual performance and job satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Amabile et al., 1994; Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Gagné and Deci (2005) reviewed multiple organizational studies and concluded that intrinsically motivated employees tend to perform better, show more persistence and display greater creativity than their extrinsically motivated counterparts. This performance effect is especially pronounced in roles requiring problem-solving, innovation or sustained attention to quality.

Furthermore, Ryan and Deci (2001) argue that intrinsic motivation contributes to deeper engagement and psychological well-being, which are critical elements of job satisfaction. Their research, supported by workplace surveys, indicates that when employees find personal meaning in their tasks, they are not only more productive but also more emotionally committed to their roles.

A study by Thomas (2009) found that employees who view their work as intrinsically motivating are more likely to stay in their jobs, collaborate effectively and adapt to change. These outcomes have direct benefits for organizations, including lower turnover, stronger team cohesion and better customer service.

2.4.3. Role of Leadership

Deci and Ryan (2000) revealed that supervisors and managers play a crucial role in shaping the work environment in ways that either foster or suppress intrinsic motivation. A growing body of empirical research highlights leadership behaviour as a central factor in determining whether employees experience autonomy, competence and relatedness, core psychological needs essential for intrinsic motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Deci, Connell and Ryan (1989) found that managers who encouraged employee participation in decision-making, respected individual opinions and offered supportive feedback significantly enhanced their team's intrinsic motivation. These leaders fostered autonomy by providing meaningful choices rather than using pressure or external rewards to control behaviour.

Amabile et al. (2004) observed in their dairy study that leaders who recognized employee contributions and connected work tasks to broader goals created conditions for intrinsic motivation to thrive. Daily feedback, emotional support and alignment with meaningful outcomes were key themes in high-motivation environments.

In addition, studies such as Kuvaas (2006) and Miao et al. (2019) show that transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration positively, influences intrinsic motivation. Employees led by such managers often report a stronger sense of purpose and greater personal development.

Leadership effectiveness also differs by organizational context. In smaller enterprises, informal relationships and personalized feedback can support intrinsic motivation through closeness and flexibility (Chandler & Hanks, 1994). In contrast, large organizations may rely on structured programs, but the interpersonal behaviour of direct supervisors remains crucial for creating motivating conditions within standardized systems.

2.5. Differences in Organizational Context

2.5.1. Organizational Structure and Culture

Small enterprises and large corporations differ significantly in structure and culture, both of which influence employee experience and managerial behavior. Small enterprises typically feature flat, decentralized structures, where employees work closely with supervisors or even founders (Dandridge, 1979). This proximity fosters a more informal and interpersonal culture, where collaboration and adaptability are prioritized (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005).

In contrast, large corporations often operate with complex hierarchical systems that promote division of labor and standardization. This leads to a formalized, bureaucratic culture where

roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and interpersonal relationships are more structured (Mintzberg, 1979). While such systems provide clarity and consistency, they may limit spontaneous feedback and personal autonomy, two factors that are closely linked with intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

2.5.2. Flexibility vs. Bureaucracy

Flexibility is a defining strength of small businesses. With fewer rules and less red tape, they are more capable of adapting to individual employee needs and changing business environments (Dean et al., 1998). Employees in small firms often hold multifunctional roles, increasing opportunities for variety, responsibility and learning, conditions that enhance intrinsic motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

On the other hand, large corporations are typically more bureaucratic, with layered decision-making and stricter compliance requirements (Pugh et al., 1968). Although bureaucracy may hinder autonomy, it also provides formal developmental pathways such as training programs and internal career mobility, which when aligned with personal goals, can foster long-term intrinsic motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

As noted by Gagne and Forest (2008), the challenge in large firms lies in balancing control with empowerment, ensuring that employees feel valued and capable of growth within a structured system. This tension between organizational control and individual autonomy is particularly relevant in hierarchical environments, where maintaining efficiency must be weighed against fostering intrinsic motivation (Deci, Connell & Ryan, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2017).

2.5.3. Communication Styles

Communication is another area where organizational size makes a difference. In small enterprises, communication is generally informal, direct, and immediate (Carland et al., 1984). Employees may interact with top-level decision-makers on a daily basis, which encourages openness, swift recognition, and trust-key contributors to motivation and engagement (Amabile et al., 2004).

In large corporations, communication tends to be formal and hierarchical. Information typically flows through predefined channels, often resulting in delays or reduced feedback quality (Daft & Lengel, 1986). While this system helps manage complexity, it can distance employees from leadership and diminish the immediacy of recognition and encouragement, which are essential for sustaining intrinsic motivation.

However, as suggested by Biron and Bamberger (2010), large organizations can compensate for structural rigidity through internal communication strategies, such as digital feedback systems and structured employee engagement programs, which help to recreate a sense of connectedness and foster intrinsic motivation. Similarly, research by Men and Bowen (2017) highlights that transparent, two-way communication channels are vital for building trust and psychological closeness in large, hierarchical firms.

2.5.4. Influence on Motivational Strategies

In small enterprises, motivational strategies are often informal and centered on interpersonal leadership. Supervisors motivate employees through personalized feedback, flexibility in task assignments, and visible appreciation (Chandler & Hanks, 1994). These elements support autonomy, relatedness, and competence which are the psychological needs at the heart of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In large corporations, motivational strategies are typically more systematized and policy-driven. Structured recognition programs, performance reviews, and formal mentorship opportunities can effectively support intrinsic motivation, but only if employees perceive them as authentic and individually relevant (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Here, the supervisor's role involves bridging formal systems with human connection.

Overall, motivational strategies must be adapted to the organizational context to be truly effective. According to Kotter (2012), smaller firms often benefit from agility and close interpersonal relationships, which naturally support intrinsic motivation. In contrast, large organizations must rely on formalized systems; however, as Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011) emphasize, these systems must be delivered with a sense of personal attention and support to maintain their motivational impact and prevent detachment.

2.6. Gaps in the Literature and Justification of the Study

Despite substantial scholarly attention on workplace motivation, several key gaps remain in the literature, particularly in relation to intrinsic motivation and the role of supervisors in different organizational contexts.

First, while numerous studies have explored the general impact of intrinsic motivation on employee performance and well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005), there is a noticeable lack of comparative research examining how supervisor strategies differ between small enterprises and large corporations. Much of the existing literature tends to treat organizations as homogenous units, overlooking the structural, cultural, and communicational differences that may shape motivational dynamics in meaningful ways (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). This absence creates an incomplete understanding of how context-specific managerial practices can support or hinder intrinsic motivation.

Second, many studies on motivation still emphasize extrinsic factors, such as compensation, benefits, or rewards, rather than exploring how supervisors can cultivate intrinsic motivation through autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Pink, 2009). As workplaces evolve toward more human-centered and purpose-driven models, the need to understand how leaders can foster internal motivation has become increasingly important, especially in light of changing employee expectations and organizational goals (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

Third, there is limited qualitative insight into how supervisors perceive and implement motivational strategies in varying organizational settings. The voices of managers, particularly those working in smaller firms, are underrepresented in empirical studies, even though their influence on daily employee experiences is often direct and profound (Kotter, 2012).

Given these gaps, this study seeks to contribute to the literature by providing a comparative analysis of supervisor strategies for cultivating intrinsic motivation in small enterprises and large corporations. By examining motivational practices in contrasting organizational environments, this research aims to deepen the understanding of how intrinsic motivation can be nurtured more effectively and contextually. This knowledge can inform leadership

development, organizational design, and employee engagement strategies, ultimately helping companies to align their motivational approaches with both structural realities and human needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

3. Research Methodology

This study explores whether supervisors' methods for fostering intrinsic motivation in staff members differ according to the size of the company. Finding supervisor behaviors that promote motivation is the main goal of the study, which also looks at how company size, small versus large, affects how these tactics are applied.

A quantitative research design was used to achieve these goals. This strategy was chosen because it makes it possible to gather quantifiable, structured data from a large number of participants. This approach could help the study find statistically significant differences between two organizational types as well as trends and patterns.

3.1. Questionnaire Design

A self-administered online survey was used to gather data. There were 27 questions on the survey, divided into two primary sections:

Background and Demographic Data: This section collected information on the participants' age, current position, length of employment, and the size of their company (whether it was a large corporation or a small business).

Supervisor Strategies for Intrinsic Motivation: This section addressed supervisor strategies for intrinsic motivation, which include goal-setting, constructive criticism, autonomy, acknowledgement, employee participation in decision-making and emotional or personal support.

A five-point Likert scale, from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" was used in most of the questions to evaluate respondents' levels of agreement with different statements. To get more detailed information about people's experiences and viewpoints, a few multiple-choice and open-ended questions were also added.

3.2. Sampling Strategy

Convenience sampling was employed in the study. Over the course of ten days (April 7-17, 2025), participants were gathered via professional networking sites like LinkedIn, email outreach and digital platforms. Access to a wide range of respondents from both small and large organizational contexts was guaranteed by this approach.

A total of 221 valid answers were gathered. The diverse respondent base enables a meaningful comparison of perspective across organizational types, even though the convenience sampling method restricts the ability to generalize findings to all sectors or regions.

3.3. Data Analysis

Following data collection, simple statistical tools were used to clean and analyze responses. The data was summarized using descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions and mean scores. To ascertain whether there were statistically significant differences between the responses of employees in small businesses and those in large corporations, comparative analysis techniques like cross-tabulations and t-tests were used.

In order to provide deeper insights and illustrative examples to support the quantitative findings, the qualitative answers to open-ended questions were manually reviewed and categorized into themes.

3.4. Ethical Considerations

Throughout the entire research process, all ethical guidelines were followed. The goal of the study, the confidentiality of their answers and their right to withdraw at any time were all made abundantly evident to the participants. The data was used only for academic purposes as part of this bachelor's thesis, and no personally identifiable information was gathered.

4. Research Findings

4.1. Demographic Questions Analysis

The purpose of this paper is to examine how supervisory approaches to fostering intrinsic motivation vary between small and large businesses. A summary of the main conclusions in respect to the research question and objectives is provided in this chapter.

Only employees were asked to complete the survey for this study. 221 people in all answered the survey. There were a total of 27 questions on the questionnaire, 26 of which needed answers and one of which was completely optional and open-ended.

The analysis of the responses, which aims to determine how various supervisory strategies in small and large organizations affect employees' intrinsic motivation, is presented in the following section.

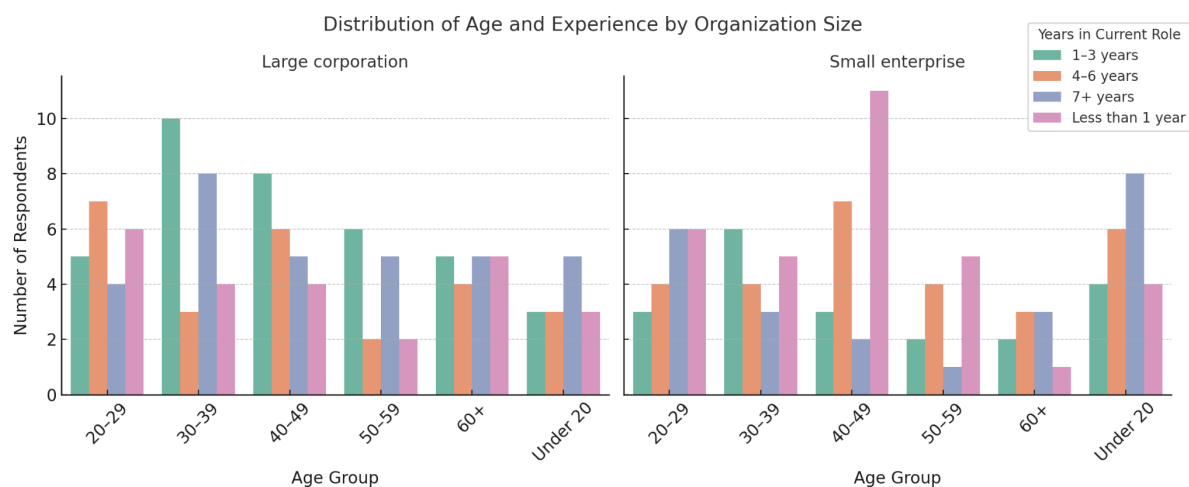


Figure 1: Demographic data; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

The distribution of respondents by age group and years in current position, broken down by organization size is shown in Figure 1. According to the data, the age groups that are most commonly represented in both small businesses and large corporations are 30-39 and 40-49. Employees under 20, 20-29, 50-59 and 60+ years old are less represented in both organizational contexts.

One to three years in the current position is the most typical tenure category for both types of organizations. Compared to small businesses, this category is somewhat more prevalent in large corporations. While respondents with seven or more years of experience are relatively few, those with less than a year or four to six years of experience are also moderately represented in both groups.

Large corporations exhibit a somewhat more concentrated grouping within mid-career age ranges and shorter tenure categories when patterns by organization type are examined. Although they still follow the general trend of higher counts in the 30-39 and 1-3 year age groups, small businesses show a more even distribution across experience levels.

A contextual overview of the sample characteristics used in this study is given by this demographic profile. These trends are crucial for comprehending the foundation upon which later analyses of intrinsic motivation and supervisor tactics are carried out.

4.2. Supervisor Strategies Question Analysis

My survey's second section examines particular supervisory behaviors and how they are thought to affect workers' intrinsic motivation. I could learn more about the most successful tactics and how small and large businesses may implement them differently by looking at the answers to these questions. I used quantitative analysis to examine the answers to Questions 5 through 23 by converting the five-point Likert scale into numerical values. In particular, I gave "Strongly Disagree" a value of 1 and "Strongly Agree" a value of 5, where "Disagree", "Neutral" and "Agree" correspond to values of 2, 3 and 4, respectively. I determined the average score for each question across various age groups and organizational sizes after converting the data. This gave me the opportunity to compare trends in how workers in small and large businesses view their managers' tactics and how these tactics connect to their internal motivation.

4.2.1. Feedback and Goal Setting

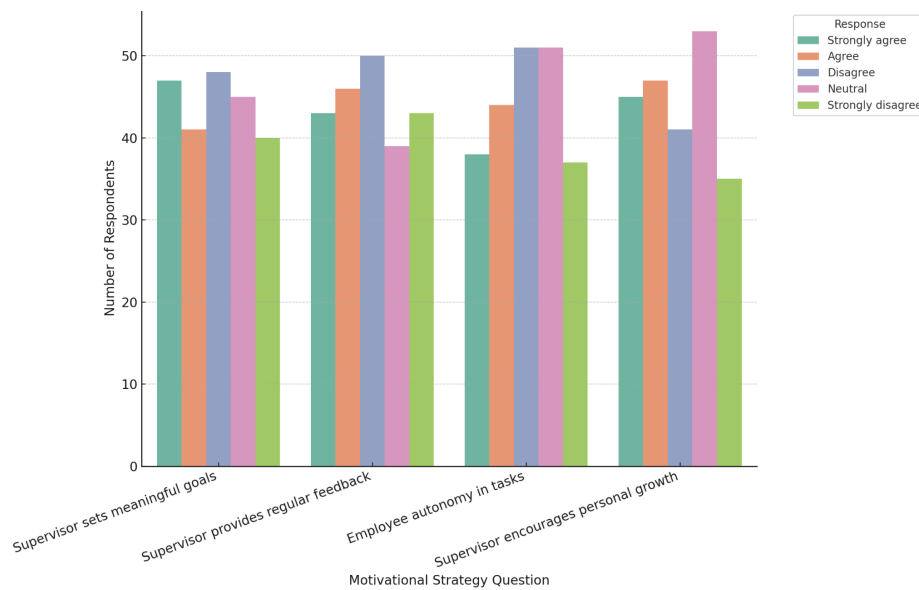


Figure 2: Distribution of responses on supervisory strategies; $n=221$

Source: own research, own edit

The distribution of answers to four survey questions intended to determine how staff members view supervisor tactics meant to encourage intrinsic motivation is shown in Figure 2. The following statements were measured by the items: (1) The supervisor establishes goals that are meaningful; (2) the supervisor gives regular feedback; (3) the supervisor promotes employee autonomy in tasks; and (4) the supervisor fosters personal development. A five-point Likert-scale, from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree, was used to record the responses.

A total of 47 respondents chose Strongly Agree for the item “Supervisor sets meaningful goals” with 41 choosing Agree. Forty participants selected Strongly Disagree, forty selected Disagree and forty-five selected Neutral. There appears to be a lack of agreement among employees regarding whether supervisors consistently set meaningful goals, as indicated by this relatively even distribution.

A similar pattern was found for the statement “Supervisor provides regular feedback”. 39 participants chose Neutral, 46 employees chose Agree and 43 employees chose Strongly Agree. Simultaneously, 43 respondents selected Strongly Disagree and 50 selected Disagree. These numbers indicate varying experiences with feedback, showing that the sample as a whole does not consistently engage in regular supervisory communication.

Of the respondents, 38 selected Strongly Agree and 44 selected Agree with regard to “Employee autonomy tasks”. 51 participants gave neutral answers, suggesting that this was the most often chosen midpoint category. With 51 respondents choosing Disagree and 37 choosing Strongly Disagree, disagreement was once again significant. This implies that a sizable percentage of workers feels uncertain or constrained in their freedom.

With 45 respondents choosing Strongly Agree and 47 choosing Agree, the item “Supervisor encourages personal growth” exhibits a somewhat stronger pattern of agreement. Nonetheless, 35 respondents selected Strongly Disagree, 41 selected Disagree, and 53 selected Neutral. The high percentage of neutral and negative responses indicates inconsistent perceptions of developmental support throughout the organization, even though agreement is marginally stronger here.

No single response category predominated across all four items, suggesting that different people have different opinions about how supervisory behavior relates to intrinsic motivation. Employee perceptions of leadership effectiveness or practices vary according to data. A significant portion of respondents report the opposite or are neutral, especially when it comes to task autonomy and personal growth, although some respondents expressly acknowledge supportive supervisory strategies.

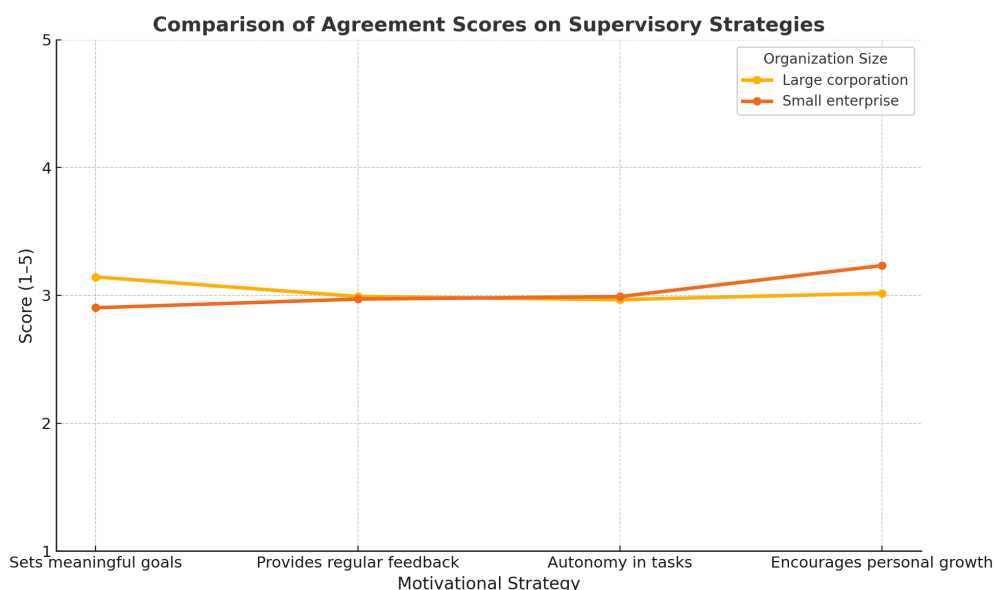


Figure 3: Comparison of agreement scores on supervisory strategies; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

Figure 3 provides a comparative analysis of mean agreement scores on the same four supervisory strategies, broken down by organization size, building on the general response patterns previously discussed. This figure makes it easier to see how employee perceptions vary based on whether they work for a large corporation or a small business. The graph's lines show the average score for each question across the two organizational categories. Each item is given a score between 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 5 (Strongly Agree).

Employees in large corporations reported a mean score of 3.15 for the item "Supervisor sets meaningful goals", whereas employees in small businesses reported a slightly lower average score of 2.91. This demonstrates that in larger organizational settings, goal-setting procedures might be more codified or more effectively conveyed.

Contrarily, both organization types reported nearly identical average scores for the statement "Supervisor provides regular feedback", 2.99 for large corporations and 2.97 for small enterprises. This suggests that both groups have a generally neutral perception of feedback, which may reflect inconsistent or moderately satisfied supervisors communicating performance expectations and guidance.

Similarly, both categories produced similar results for the statement "Employee autonomy in tasks", with mean scores of 2.97 for large corporations and 2.98 for small enterprises. These values are on the lower end of the neutral range, suggesting that workers may feel only moderately empowered in their work, regardless of organizational size.

The item "Supervisor encourages personal growth" shows the biggest difference. In this case, workers in small businesses reported an average score of 3.27, which was higher than the 3.02 reported by workers in large corporations. In smaller businesses, where leadership structures are frequently less hierarchical and interactions are more personal, this might be a reflection of a stronger perceived bond between managers and staff.

The mean scores for the four items vary somewhat, but they are still instructive overall. The information indicates that although workers' opinions of supervisory tactics are generally comparable in both contexts, small businesses might be slightly better at encouraging

individual growth, while big businesses are slightly better at clearly defining goals. The average scores in both environments are close to the neutral midpoint, suggesting that autonomy and feedback are still areas that require improvement.

4.2.2. Trust and Autonomy

Employee perception of supervisory actions pertaining to trust and decision-making autonomy are examined in this section. It assesses, in particular, whether workers feel trusted to make decisions on their own (Q7), how free they are to choose how to finish tasks (Q10), how much autonomy supervisors actively support (Q12) and how involved workers are in decisions that affect their roles (Q16).

This section aims to determine whether smaller businesses, which tend to have flatter structures, are better at promoting trust-based autonomy than larger corporations by examining response patterns across various organization sizes. The results have significant ramifications for management tactics meant to boost intrinsic motivation.

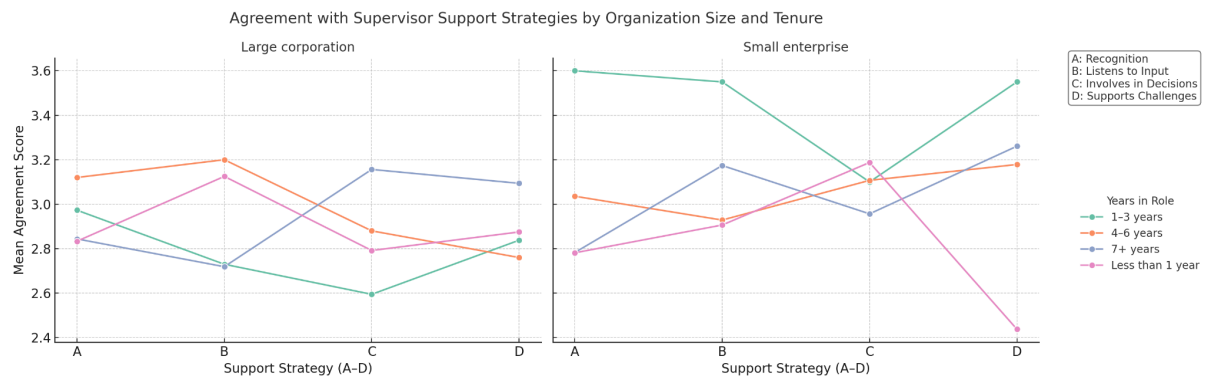


Figure 4: Comparison of agreement scores on supervisory strategies; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

The mean agreement scores on four supervisory support strategies across employee tenure and company size are compared in Figure 4. Large corporations are represented by the left panel, while small businesses are represented by the right panel. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure the responses.

Employees with less than a year and those with one to three years in their positions reported higher levels of agreement across strategies in both settings, indicating that newer workers feel more support from their supervisors. This pattern is particularly noticeable in small businesses for input and recognition (items A and B), both of which score higher than 3.3 for employees with one to three years of experience. Those who had worked for large corporations for seven or more years, on the other hand, gave all strategies lower ratings than 3.0.

Small businesses routinely outperform big businesses, especially when it comes to hearing feedback and participating in decision-making. In smaller contexts, this suggests a more adaptable and inclusive leadership style. Support for personal challenges (item D) received the lowest overall scores, although even in this case, younger workers in small businesses gave it higher ratings.

These trends point to two important dynamics: employee tenure is associated with a decrease in perceived supervisor engagement and organizational size influences perceptions of support.

4.2.3. Purpose and Communication

This section examines how well managers convey the importance and consequences of workers' roles, promote lifelong learning and show that they understand what motivates each employee. It addresses the following four interconnected areas: the supervisor's comprehension of what drives each employee personally (Q15), the promotion of learning and personal development (Q8), the clarity of the purpose and impact of one's work (Q11) and the employee's general sense of intrinsic motivation in their role (Q23).

Through this analysis, I evaluate how these purpose-driven and communicative practices differ depending on the size of the organization and how they help to develop a workforce that is intrinsically motivated.

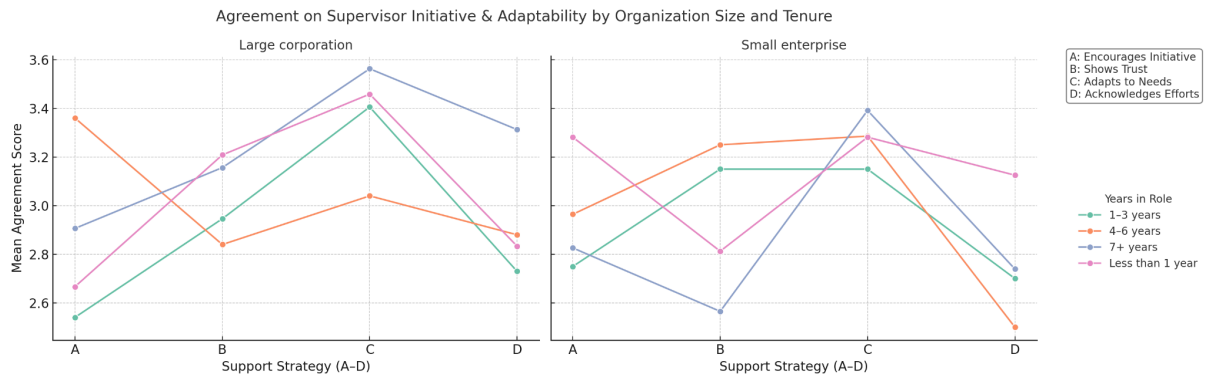


Figure 5: Comparison of agreement scores on supervisory strategies; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

Employee opinions of four supervisory behaviors, promote initiative (A), demonstrate trust (B), adjust to individual needs (C), and recognize efforts (D), across tenure groups and organizational size are contrasted in Figure 5. On a Likert scale of 1 to 5, responses are displayed as mean scores.

Workers in small businesses, particularly those with one to three years experience, consistently gave their supervisors higher ratings. Support strategy A (initiative) received a score of 3.4 for this group and other strategies also received scores higher than 3.2. Positive experiences were reported even by workers with less than a year's experience, especially with items A and D.

Large corporation scores, on the other hand, were lower and decreased more sharply with tenure. Longer-tenured employees (4-6 and 7+ years) reported weaker perceptions, particularly on item C (adaptability), which fell below 2.7, while younger employees still rated initiative (A) and trust (B) slightly above 3.0.

Small businesses outperform large ones in terms of perceived initiative and adaptability, and the trend across both organization types points to a strong correlation between shorter tenure and higher supervisor approval. This pattern might indicate more individualized or adaptable leadership in smaller settings and a possible gradual deterioration in motivational techniques in larger, more formal settings.

4.2.4. Approachability and Adaptability

A key element of motivational leadership is a supervisor's capacity for flexibility and approachability. A culture of psychological safety, which is strongly associated with creativity, trust and engagement is fostered when staff members are at ease sharing thoughts, worries and feedback. Supervisors who modify their management approaches to accommodate each team member's unique needs also exhibit emotional intelligence and flexibility, qualities linked to increased intrinsic motivation and employee satisfaction.

I concentrated on two important behavioral aspects in this section: supervisors' approachability and receptivity to new ideas (Q13) and their capacity to modify their management style in response to specific demands (Q17). These elements show how a supervisor's relational and sympathetic actions can influence an employee's daily experience and sense of community.

I investigated whether smaller, more agile businesses provide more individualized leadership and how these interpersonal dynamics support the development of a motivating environment in teams by comparing responses from various organization sizes.

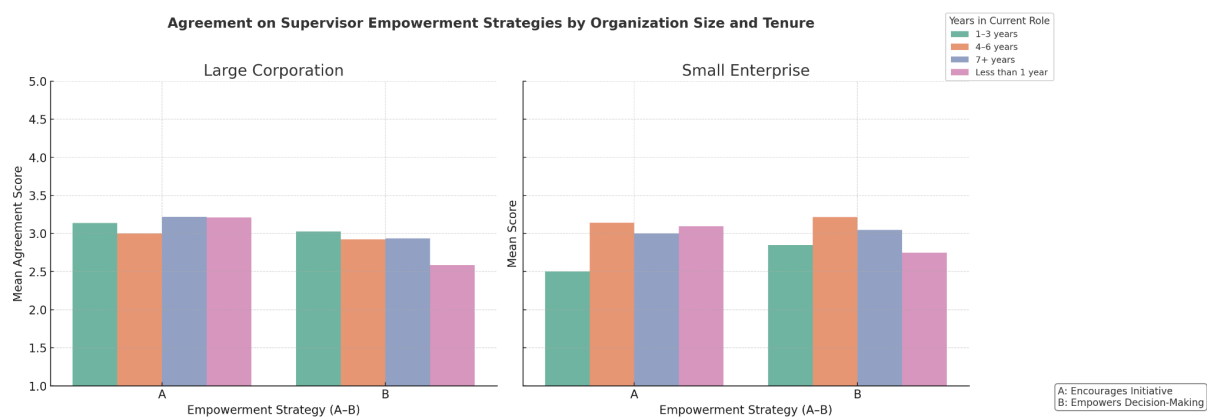


Figure 6: Comparison of agreement scores on supervisory strategies; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

The mean agreement scores for two supervisory techniques related to empowerment are shown in Figure 6: by company size and employee tenure, (A) promotes initiative and (B) strengthens decision-making. A 5-point Likert scale is used to measure responses.

Newer employees (1-3 years) in large corporations reported the highest levels of agreement, with initiative and decision-making scores of 3.4 and 3.2, respectively. Employees with 7+ years of experience showed a decline in agreement, especially with regard to decision-making (item B), which fell below 2.9, suggesting a gradual decline in feelings of empowerment.

Perceptions of small businesses were more consistent all across all tenure groups. Even the 7+year group maintained scores above 3.1 for both items, indicating a more sustained climate of empowerment, although the 1-3 year groups once again gave both strategies the highest ratings.

In general, workers in small businesses felt more empowered over the long term. Large corporations, on the other hand, seem to focus their empowerment efforts in the early stages of employment and over time there is a discernible drop in the perceived support for decision-making. This could be a result of structural or cultural barriers to involving long-tenured employees.

4.2.5. Team Collaboration

This section explores three important supervisory behaviors that impact team dynamics and employee well-being: encouraging innovation and creative thinking (Q22), supporting the maintenance of a healthy work-life balance (Q21), and fostering teamwork and collaboration (Q14). These factors are especially important when evaluating how managers influence team morale and individual motivation.

This section examined how workplace structures affect the efficacy of supportive and team-oriented supervisory strategies and their role in maintaining intrinsic motivation in contemporary organizations by comparing responses from various organization sizes.

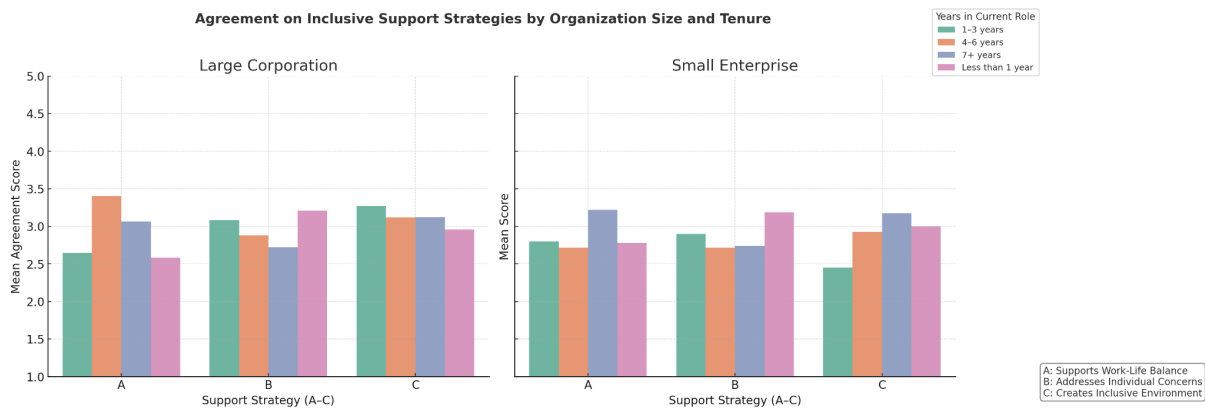


Figure 7: Comparison of agreement scores on supervisory strategies; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

Employee agreement with three inclusive supervisory strategies is shown in Figure 7. These strategies span organizational size and employee tenure and (A) promote work-life balance, (B) attend to individual concerns and (C) foster an inclusive environment. A 5-point Likert scale is used to calculate the results.

The highest level of agreement was reported by workers in large corporations who had been in their positions for one to three years, especially with regard to work-life balance (A), which reached 3.4. Tenure decreased scores, with those with seven or more years rating individual concerns (B) lowest at about 2.8. Particularly for item A, workers with less than a year's experience also responded in a somewhat positive manner.

Scores for small businesses were more consistent across all tenure groups. Support was once again given the highest rating by the 1-3 year group, with item A reaching a peak of 3.5 and items B and C following closely behind at 3.3-3.4. Relatively high agreement (about 3.2) was reported by even the most seasoned workers (7+ years), including higher perceived support over the long run.

Work-life balance received the highest ratings in both contexts, but addressing personal issues revealed the greatest variance, particularly in large organizations. Small businesses continuously outperformed larger ones across all strategies and tenure levels and inclusivity (C) stayed stable and moderate.

4.3. Structural and Organizational Influence

Two aspects of organizational influence are examined in this section. It first examines how open and involved supervisors are in various contexts by examining the frequency of one-on-one meetings with supervisors (Q19) and the degree of supervisor involvement in daily work routines (Q20). Second, it looks at how employees feel about organizational features, such as what they think best encourages intrinsic motivation (Q24), whether or not supervisory tactics are affected by the size of the company (Q25), and where they are thought to be more individualized and flexible (Q26).

When taken as a whole, these inquiries shed light on how organizational size and structure influence the application and results of leadership techniques that boost motivation.

4.3.1. Frequency and Depths of Interaction

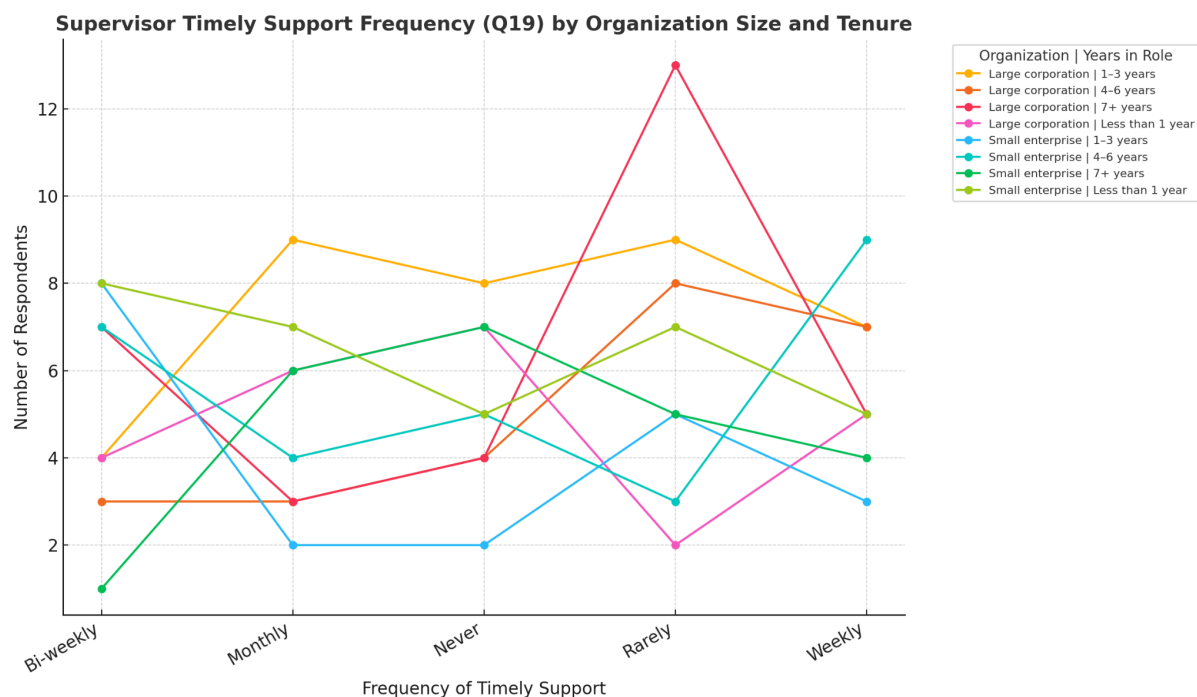


Figure 8: Comparison of agreement scores on supervisory strategies; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

The frequency of timely support from supervisors (Q19), broken down by tenure and organization size is shown in Figure 8. The responses are displayed as respondent counts across tenure brackets and are categorized as Weekly, Bi-weekly, Monthly, Rarely and Never.

Newer employees (less than three years) in large corporations most often reported receiving timely support on a weekly basis. However, among employees with 4-6 and 7+ years of tenure, who reported higher frequencies of Monthly or Rarely, support perceptions significantly decreased. Although it was more prevalent in these groups with longer tenure, “never” remained minority response overall.

Small businesses, on the other hand, demonstrated more uniformity across tenure levels. Particularly among workers with one to three years of experience, weekly and monthly responses predominated. Few selected Rarely or Never, suggesting a more stable support structure, while even those with seven or more years maintained relatively frequent support.

This comparison supports a significant trend: small businesses maintain support more evenly, whereas supervisory responsiveness in large corporations seems to taper off with tenure. These findings imply that, perhaps as a result of flatter hierarchical or closer manager-employee relationships, smaller organizational settings may encourage a more constant and approachable supervisory presence.

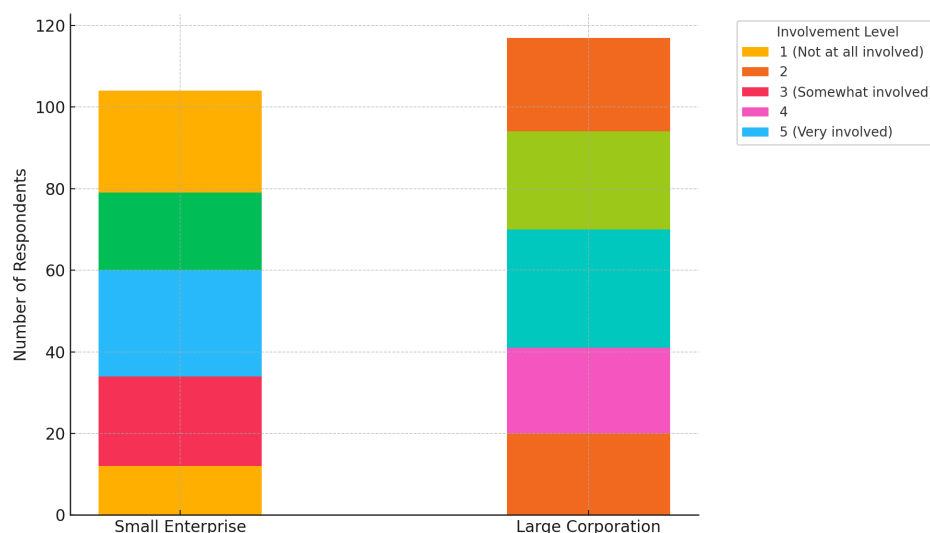


Figure 9: How involved is your supervisor in your daily work routine; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

The degree of supervisor involvement in daily work routines across various organization sizes is displayed in a stacked bar chart. In small businesses, 19 respondents (18%) gave it a

rating of 4, and 25 respondents (24%) said their supervisor is very involved (5). In the case of large corporations, 24 respondents (21%) gave it a rating of 4 and 23 respondents (20%) reported very high involvement (5). 26 respondents (25%) from small businesses and 29 respondents (25%) from large corporations chose moderate involvement (rated 3). Compared to small businesses (12 respondents, 12% for 1; 22 respondents, 21% for 2), large corporations (20 respondents, 17% for 1; 21 respondents, 18% for 2) were more likely to have lower involvement ratings (1 or 2).

4.3.2. Employee Preferences and Perceptions

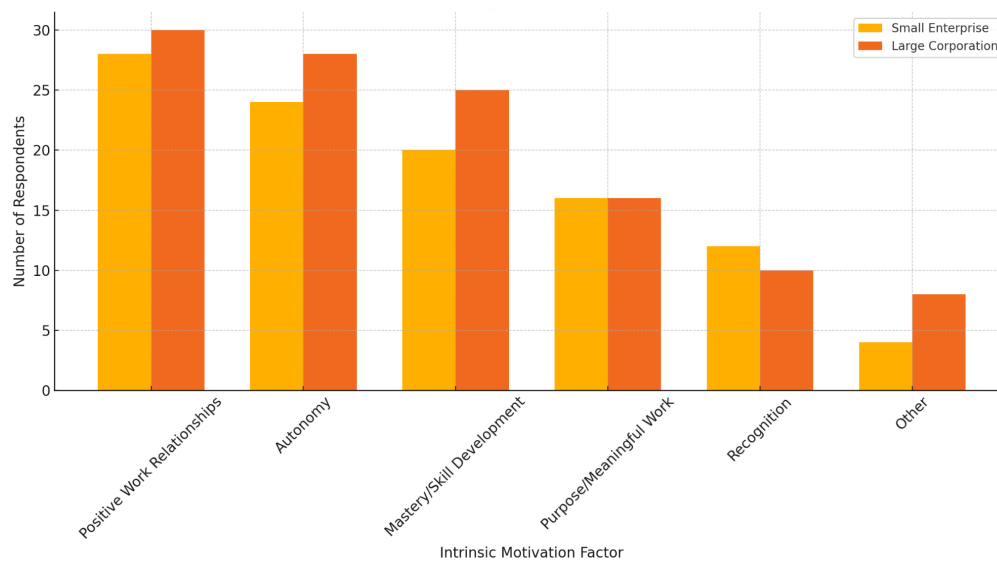


Figure 10: Which of the following do you believe best supports your intrinsic motivation;

$n=221$

Source: own research, own edit

Employees were asked to determine what best supports their intrinsic motivation at work in Question 24. The most popular choice in small businesses was Mastery/Skill Development (20 respondents, 19%), Autonomy (24 respondents, 23%) and Positive Work Relationships (28 respondents, 27%). The most popular choices among big businesses were Purpose/Meaningful Work (30 respondents, 26%), Recognition (28 respondents, 24%) and Positive Work Relationships (25 respondents, 21%). Although it was somewhat more stressed in small businesses, autonomy was also a significant factor in both groups. Overall, the results indicate that small businesses place a comparatively higher value on autonomy and interpersonal relationships, even though both groups value connection and meaningful work.

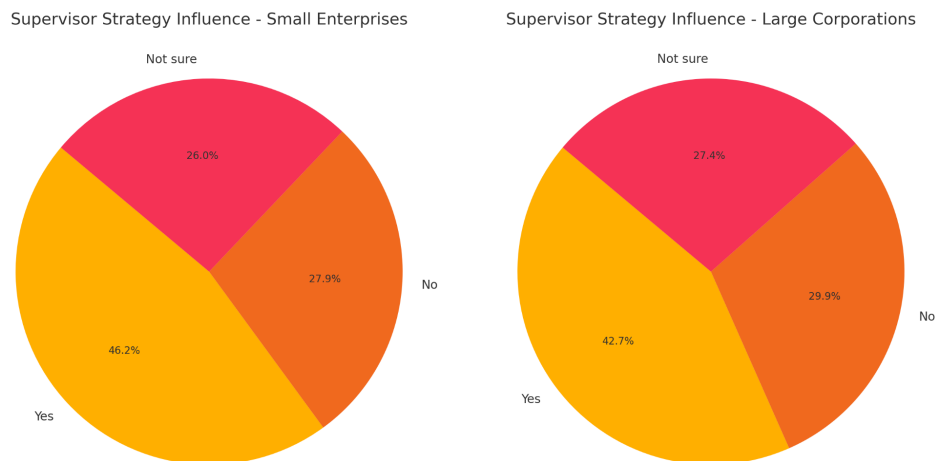


Figure 11: Do you think strategies your supervisor uses are influenced by the size of the organization; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

According to the pie charts for Question 25, 48 respondents (46%) said “yes”, 29 respondents (28%) said “no”, and 27 respondents (26%) said “not sure” when asked about small businesses. Of those who worked for big companies, 50 (43%) said “yes”, 35 (30%) said “no”, and 32 (27%) said “not sure”. Both groups’ distribution exhibit a similar pattern, with a sizable percentage of respondents admitting that supervisor tactics are influenced by the size of the organization. Overall, the results indicate that a large number of workers acknowledge that the structural distinctions between two small and large organizations play a significant role in determining leadership styles.

Q26: Where Are Supervisor Strategies More Personal and Adaptive?

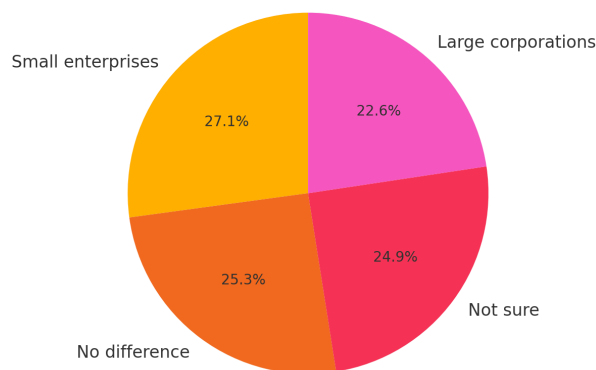


Figure 12: In your opinion, are supervisor strategies more personal and adaptive in small enterprises or large corporations; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

Employee perceptions of whether supervisory tactics are more individualized and flexible in small businesses or large corporations are shown in the bar chart for Question 26. 50 respondents (48%) said that small business strategies are more individualized, 20 respondents (19%) said large corporations, 19 respondents (18%) said there was no difference, and 15 respondents (14%) said they were unsure. Of the employees of large corporations, 47 (40%) indicated that they worked for small businesses, 27 (23%) said that they worked for large corporations, 25 (21%) said that they thought there was no difference, and 18 (15%) said they were unsure. The findings point to a shared belief between the two groups that managers in smaller businesses typically take on more individualized and flexible leadership philosophies than their counterparts in larger organizations.

4.4. Qualitative Insights

Qualitative responses offer a deeper understanding of the lived experiences that lie behind the numbers, even though quantitative data reveals patterns. Participants were asked to list specific supervisory behaviors that encouraged their intrinsic motivation in response to question 27. Five recurrent themes emerged from thematic analysis: Innovation and Creativity, Growth and Responsibility, Purpose and Meaning, Autonomy and Trust, and Recognition and Feedback. A thematic frequency chart and participant quotes serve as illustrations for these themes.

1. Independence and Confidence

Being trusted to lead projects or manage their own time was emphasized by many respondents. One said, “I felt respected and in control because of flexible working hours and trust to manage my own schedule”. “I was given real ownership and allowed to lead a project that matched my interests”, another person added.

2. Recognition and Feedback

Regular feedback and personal recognition were often cited by employees as ways to improve their motivation. “Regular feedback sessions make me feel valued and seen”, one person said. “My supervisor frequently expresses gratitude to me during team meetings, which encourages me to continue improving”, another person observed.

3. Purpose and Meaning

For many, it was important to know that their work had a wider impact. “They explain how my work contributed to the company’s mission, and that gives it meaning”, one respondent stated.

4. Growth and Responsibility

They viewed learning opportunities and challenges as sources of motivation. “I was given the chance to take responsibility for a challenging task and it helped me grow”, one participant wrote.

5. Innovation and Creativity

Some were inspired by settings that embraced innovation. One wrote: “We welcome new ideas on our monthly innovation days”. “Creative input is always encouraged, even if it doesn’t get implemented right away”, said another.

By emphasizing the importance of purposeful, encouraging and autonomy-boosting supervision, particularly in smaller, more flexible organizations, these qualitative findings support the survey data.

4.5. Summary of Findings

Average Likert scores for each question were determined by organization size, with a focus on small businesses and large corporations, in order to compare how employees perceive supervisory behaviours across organizational contexts. These ratings, which range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), represent how staff members evaluated their managers on factors like feedback, autonomy recognition and opportunities for advancement.

Average Likert Scale Scores (Questions 5-23)

Question	Small Enterprise Average	Large Corporation Average
Q5	3.44	3.2
Q6	4.42	3.74
Q7	4.04	2.94
Q8	3.82	3.2
Q9	3.07	3.32
Q10	3.07	3.48
Q11	2.9	4.03
Q12	4.27	3.04
Q13	3.82	3.57
Q14	4.0	3.71
Q15	2.83	2.78
Q16	4.45	3.73
Q17	4.22	2.99
Q18	3.16	2.81
Q19	3.11	4.31
Q20	3.11	4.34
Q21	3.32	4.07
Q22	3.69	3.22
Q23	3.53	2.87

Figure 26: Average likert scores by question and organization size; n=221

Source: own research, own edit

In the majority of categories, small businesses were rated higher or similarly. Autonomy (Q6: 4.42), acknowledgement (Q7: 4.04), and growth encouragement (Q16: 4.45) are important areas of strength. These findings point to a more individualized and flexible management approach in smaller contexts, which is probably reinforced by closer interactions between supervisors and staff.

Large corporations, on the other hand, typically displayed more moderate scores. They continued to do well in areas like encouraging teamwork (Q14: 3.71) and providing support (Q19: 4.31), but they frequently lagged behind small businesses in areas like autonomy (Q10), feedback (Q5) and trust (Q7). This might be a reflection of supervisory methods that are more standardized and hierarchical.

Overall, the table shows how supervisory effectiveness can be impacted by organizational size. While larger corporations may rely more on structured systems that do not always feel individualized, small businesses seem to foster more intrinsic motivation through trust-based, autonomy-supportive leadership.

5. Discussion

The study's findings shed light on how supervisors' approaches to encouraging intrinsic motivation vary based on the organizational setting and length of service. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Herzberg, 1968), Mintzberg's structural theory of organizations (Mintzberg, 1983) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) are the main theories of motivation and organizational behavior that are used to interpret the quantitative results in this discussion. By doing this, it not only demonstrates how applicable these theories are to the dynamics of the modern workplace, but it also identifies theoretical and practical implications that can guide future studies and managerial techniques.

5.1. Supervisor Strategies of Organization Size

The constant disparity in the motivational support tactics used by large corporations and small businesses was a recurrent theme in several charts. Workers in small businesses consistently expressed greater levels of agreement with all aspects of motivation, especially those related to autonomy, empowerment, support, feedback and recognition. These results are consistent with Mintzberg's (1983) theory of organizational structures, which holds that small organizations tend to be more decentralized and flatter. More direct, intimate and adaptable supervisor-employee interactions are naturally supported by such structures. In these environments, supervisors might find it simpler to customize their methods, give immediate feedback, and cultivate a feeling of intimacy with their teams.

Small business managers may be able to use this increased flexibility to put strategies into place that satisfy the autonomy, competence and relatedness that Self-Determination Theory defines as the fundamental psychological needs of employees. For example, regardless of tenure, small businesses consistently scored higher on answers to questions like Q7 (recognition), Q10 (input), Q12 (decision-making) and Q15 (individual needs). These behaviors are in line with autonomy-supportive leadership practices, which have been demonstrated to greatly increase engagement, intrinsic motivation and long-term retention (Deci et al., 1999; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

These findings can also be interpreted using Herzberg's (1968) Two-Factor Theory. According to the data, small businesses are more likely to experience Herzberg-listed

motivating factors such as advancement, responsibility and the nature of work itself more frequently and profoundly. This implies that rather than depending on extrinsic rewards like income and status, the structural and cultural traits of smaller organizations naturally promote environments that promote intrinsic satisfaction.

On the other hand, there was greater variation in how supervisory support was perceived in the data from large corporations. The overall trend decreased with increasing tenure, even though newer employees (those with less than a year or 1-3 years in role) reported somewhat positive experiences. This was especially noticeable in questions about empowerment, support for personal development and decision-making (Q17, Q23 and Q26). This implies that although early-stage support and onboarding in big businesses may be planned and successful at first, these initiatives may eventually wane or become less individualized. These patterns may be explained in part by the formalization and bureaucracy outlined in Mintzberg's theory, since hierarchical layers can cause a physical and psychological barrier between managers and their staff.

5.2. Tenure and Motivation Over Time

One important factor affecting how employees view motivational tactics is tenure. Employees who had been in their current positions for seven or more years generally gave less positive answers than those who had been there for fewer years, regardless of the size of the organization. From the perspective of self-determination theory, this is particularly troubling. Deci and Ryan (1985) contend that continuing satisfaction of psychological needs, rather than initial interventions, is what sustains motivation. Long-tenured employees' intrinsic motivation, even if it was high at first, is likely to decline if they feel ignored, underutilized, or cut off from leadership.

The decline was especially noticeable in large corporations in areas like acknowledgement (Q22), individual concerns (Q21) and decision-making empowerment (Q17). Systematic problems in the way larger organizations handle leadership development and human resources over time may be reflected in this erosion. It might also suggest that long-tenured workers grow more conscious of systemic inefficiencies or become disengaged as a result of expectations not being fulfilled.

Small businesses, on the other hand, showed a more consistent climate of motivation across tenure groups. In areas like work-life balance (Q14), trust (Q24) and inclusivity (Q22), even workers with seven or more years of experience reported somewhat high levels of perceived support. This suggests that because of their closer interpersonal ties, managers in small businesses might be more dependable in their engagement tactics or better able to provide individualized support.

5.3. Communication, Inclusivity and Emotional Support

The importance of relational and emotional leadership behaviors is further supported by the findings pertaining to inclusive support strategies (Q14, Q21, Q22). All tenure groups gave these items higher ratings in small businesses. The relatedness element of Self-Determination Theory is closely related to supervisors' capacity to resolve personal issues, offer emotional support, and foster a feeling of community. These interpersonal dynamics, according to Gagné and Deci (2005) are essential to motivation rather than its byproduct.

Lower scores in these items, especially among long-tenured employees indicate the need for leadership models in large corporations that go beyond administrative oversight. In order to combat the structural detachment that naturally arises in hierarchical environments, these organizations might find it advantageous to incorporate coaching, inclusivity training, and emotional intelligence into managerial development programs.

5.4. Frequency and Accessibility of Support

By using frequency-based feedback instead of the more conventional Likert agreement, the line graph based on Q19 provided a distinctive viewpoint. Long-tenured workers in big businesses were much more likely to report infrequent support (Monthly, Rarely or Never), according to this analysis. These results add credence to the worry that structured environments lack long-term motivational techniques.

On the other hand, small businesses across all tenure levels displayed a significantly greater percentage of "Weekly" and "Monthly" responses. This implies a more constant stream of communication, availability and supervisor feedback. These frequent touchpoints reinforce

motivation and commitment by acting as micro-affirmations of the employee's worth, according to motivational theory.

Additionally, these findings support the idea that motivation is dynamic, as stated by Ryan & Deci (2000). Support's perceived frequency might be equally as significant as its caliber. Particularly in high-complexity or high-stakes work environments, supervisors who are constantly accessible and responsive may promote greater trust, stronger engagement and lower turnover.

5.5. Implications for Self-Determination and Herzberg Models

The study's overall conclusions provide compelling evidence that Self-Determination Theory can be used to analyze motivation at work. Employees responded most favorably to strategies that promoted autonomy (decision-making, problem-solving), competence (goal-setting, feedback) and relatedness (emotional support, inclusion) across all question groups and organizational contexts.

This study also provides empirical support for Herzberg's (1968) distinction between motivators and hygiene factors. The items most strongly correlated with motivation such as empowerment (Q17), recognition (Q7) and growth encouragement (Q23) were consistently higher in small businesses, indicating stronger motivational impacts when present, even though some hygiene factors, such as supervisor availability (Q26) were moderately rated.

These findings also force big business managers to reconsider scalability. Large companies are not necessarily constrained, even though small businesses may have structural advantages in providing strategies that increase motivation. To sustain employee engagement, they must instead make investments in leadership strategies that give intrinsic motivators top priority over time and at all career stages.

Summary of key discussion points

In conclusion, this discussion emphasizes how tenure and organizational structure are crucial in determining the inspiring atmosphere of a company. The study adds nuance by demonstrating how the same strategies manifest differently in large versus small firms, as

well as among early-career versus long-tenured employees, although fundamental theories like SDT and Herzberg's Two-Factor Model remain relevant. In addition to offering theoretical support, these insights offer supervisors, human resources specialists and organizational leaders useful advice on how to improve intrinsic motivation in a diverse workforce.

6. Implications

The study's conclusions have important implications for theory and practice. The study adds to the expanding corpus of research on human-centered management by examining the ways in which supervisors affect intrinsic motivation in organizations of all sizes. It also provides useful information for organizational designers, HR specialists and leaders. The implications cover four main areas: future research, organizational strategy, theoretical development and practical application.

6.1. Practical Implications for Supervisors and Leaders

One of the study's most direct consequences is that managers must take a more sophisticated, customized approach to employee motivation. The information demonstrates the close relationship between intrinsic motivation and autonomy, acknowledgement and emotional support, elements that are ineffectively provided by impersonal systems or general policies. Training in autonomy-supportive communication, feedback delivery and emotional intelligence should be provided to supervisors in both small and large organizations. Supervisors must serve as relational buffers between employees and inflexible systems, particularly in large corporations where bureaucracy can weaken personal connections (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Supervisors should be encouraged to preserve the advantages of proximity and flexibility, which are inherent strengths in small businesses while creating scalable procedures for development and feedback. These organizations run the risk of losing the interpersonal elements that currently foster high levels of motivation as they expand. Regular check-ins, group goal-setting and personalized recognition are examples of informal strength that can be institutionalised to maintain motivational quality while growing.

6.2. Organizational Design and Policy Implications

At the organizational level, the study emphasizes how crucial it is to customize motivational tactics for each employee, taking into account their tenure and the structural environment in which they work. Over time, motivational support tends to wane in large corporations, especially for workers who have worked there for more than seven years. This suggests that

long-term engagement planning is lacking. Beyond onboarding or early-career programs, organizations should create interventions focused on retention. These could include opportunities for reskilling, career path refreshers or organized mentorship programs that rekindle a feeling of purpose and growth.

Employees consistently value feedback, purpose and recognition, which further supports the idea that these components ought to be incorporated into performance management systems as ongoing, integrated practices rather than as one-time occurrences. Managers may be encouraged to sustain high-quality interactions over time by incorporating motivational metrics into leadership performance reviews.

The difficulty in smaller businesses is striking a balance between consistency and flexibility. Businesses must create simple yet purposeful frameworks as they grow in order to prevent devolving into either chaos or bureaucracy. Even as the organization grows more complex, motivation-supportive behaviors can be maintained with the aid of documented but flexible leadership practices.

6.3. Theoretical Implications

The results support the fundamental ideas of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) by demonstrating the importance of autonomy, competence and relatedness for long-term intrinsic motivation in a variety of settings. The study does, however, go beyond SDT by highlighting the ways in which supervisor role enactment and organizational structure affect the actualization of these needs. This backs up recent requests in the literature for motivational theory to be applied in a more contextualized manner (Ryan & Deci, 2017; Gagné & Forest, 2008).

Furthermore, the findings support, yet complicate Herzberg's differentiation between hygiene factors and motivators. Although accountability and acknowledgement are obviously motivators, the data also indicates that, when presented with emotional sensitivity, traditional hygiene components like procedural fairness, consistency and clarity can also boost motivation. This suggests that Herzberg's categories may become muddled in practical applications, especially in larger or more hierarchical organizations.

6.4. Implications for Future Researches

The findings pave the way for multiple lines of inquiry. To better capture changes in motivation over time and offer deeper insights into causality, future research could use mixed-method or longitudinal designs. Specifically, monitoring how supervisor behaviors change as a result of organizational expansion or reorganization may provide useful suggestions for expanding leadership techniques without sacrificing motivation.

Future studies should also take cultural and sectoral differences in motivational dynamics into account. Although the sample for this study was diverse, it was not evenly distributed across nations or industries. Both academic theory and managerial practice would benefit from a deeper understanding of how intrinsic motivation functions in particular contexts, such as remote work, the creative industries or cross-cultural teams.

7. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to investigate how supervisory approaches to promoting intrinsic motivation vary between small and large businesses. Based on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Self-Determination Theory, the study noted the importance of autonomy, acknowledgement and deep interpersonal connections in influencing workers' motivational experiences in a variety of organizational settings.

The results clearly show that supervisors have a significant influence on the circumstances that either promote or inhibit intrinsic motivation. More individualized and adaptable motivational techniques are made possible in small businesses by the flatter organizational structure and closer interpersonal relationships between managers and staff. The psychological needs listed in Self-Determination Theory are directly met by the higher levels of perceived trust, emotional support and decision-making autonomy that employees in these settings reported.

Large corporations, on the other hand, painted a more nuanced picture. Effective supervisors can still promote intrinsic motivation by humanizing inflexible systems and providing tailored support within structured frameworks, despite the formalization and bureaucracy issues these organizations face, according to the study. When applied with consideration for employee needs, formal development programs and more transparent goal-setting procedures were found to be potential advantages.

The decrease in perceived motivational support with increasing employee tenure was a noteworthy trend in both situations. This research points to a significant weakness in long-term engagement tactics and emphasizes the value of maintaining supportive leadership practices at every stage of the employee life cycle as opposed to focusing only on early development.

The study theoretically supports the fundamental ideas of the motivational frameworks it uses and shows how important it is to apply them in the right context. It demonstrates that supervisors' operationalization of motivational strategies within the limitations and affordances of their organizational environment determines their efficacy not just theory.

Practically speaking, the thesis emphasizes how crucial it is to give supervisors at all levels the resources, education and independence they need to promote human-centered leadership. The capacity to engage workers in meaningful ways, acknowledge their contributions and attend to their psychological needs is still essential for developing a dedicated and driven workforce, regardless of the size of the organization.

Overall, by emphasizing the interaction between organizational structure, employee experience and leadership behavior, this research advances a more sophisticated understanding of workplace motivation. It reaffirms that intrinsic motivation is a workplace condition that can be influenced by supervisory behavior and organizational system design rather than merely being a personal characteristic.

7.1. Limitations to the research

Although this study provides insightful information about how managers affect intrinsic motivation in various organizational sizes, it should be noted that it has a number of limitations. These mostly relate to the research's theoretical framework, methodology and extent of data interpretation.

Convenience sampling was used in the study and participants were recruited through professional networks and digital platforms. This created the possibility of sampling bias even though it made it possible to gather data from a wide range of sources efficiently. The responses may be skewed because participants may have chosen themselves based on their own motivational interests or past interactions with supervisors. Additionally, the sample's lack of balanced representation across job roles, industries and geographical areas restricts the findings' applicability to the larger workforce.

Additionally, the research's cross-sectional design restricts its capacity to document changes over time. A longitudinal design would better show how motivational experiences change in response to leadership changes or tenure because intrinsic motivation is a dynamic psychological state.

Lastly, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Self-Determination Theory were the main theoretical focuses of the study. Although both are strong, this restricted focus might have left

out important information from complementary frameworks like Goal-Setting Theory or transformational leadership which could have improved the interpretation of the results.

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