

**RCIO 2019 *Research Proposal Submission***

*The included submission aims to explore employee satisfaction and motivational differences between low-income and medium-income employees. This study will empirically investigate possible causes of motivation and job satisfaction levels and provide information on how to improve these conditions.*

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**Poster Title:** Employee Satisfaction and Motivation Differences between Low-Income and Medium-Income Employees

**Abstract** [Word Count: 195]: Employee job satisfaction and motivation are linked to their income level. Employee job satisfaction refers to an individual's contentment with his or her job. Employee motivation has two components; extrinsic motivation refers to external benefits an individual gain (i.e. pay), whereas intrinsic motivation refers to an individual's inherent satisfaction with one's job (i.e. pride in the work they do). Higher or lower income levels impact employee satisfaction and motivation. It is hypothesized that individuals with medium-income (\$45,000-\$139,999) will have higher job satisfaction and motivation than individual with low-income (\$0-\$44,999). An independent samples t-test will be conducted between the two groups and the researchers will use two surveys to determine employee satisfaction and motivation. A 36-item Job Satisfaction Survey and 18-item Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale will be emailed to managers in food and service industry within 15 miles of Chattanooga City Hall. They will be incentivized to forward the survey to their employees, who will also be incentivized to complete the survey. We expect results to verify our hypothesis. Future research should examine how to potentially increase employee motivation by introducing and balancing more extrinsic and intrinsic factors in retail and food service positions.

**Keywords:** Job Satisfaction, employee motivation, low-income, medium-income, intrinsic, extrinsic

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## **Employee Satisfaction and Motivational Differences between Low and Medium-Income Employees**

Income is an important variable for employees, with research suggesting a small positive linear relationship between income and job satisfaction (Parker & Brummel, 2016). Employee satisfaction is defined as a “psychological process that energizes and maintains human activity in relation to work, task or project” (Spector, 1997). This relationship between job satisfaction and income level can be exacerbated by employee motivation because motivation is a significant factor that effects the willingness to use the knowledge and skills to the benefit of the employer by the employee that possesses it (Hitka, Rozsa, Potkany, & Lizbetinova, 2019). Low-income employees already have issues being motivated in the workplace, with research inferring that part-time (low-income) employee satisfaction is lower than full-time employee satisfaction (Giannikis & Mihail, 2011). There are a number of factors that are involved that effect job satisfaction and motivation in the workplace with low-income employees, such as pay and living conditions. A study conducted by De Coning, Rothmann, & Stander suggested that perceptions of income levels are associated with various positive or negative attributes an individual can feel about themselves (2019). A major factor is job enthusiasm, which is a subset of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are two main factors that make up employee motivation. Intrinsic motivation is more of an active form of motivation where the job is inherently satisfying and its incentives are directly attached to performance like competitive base pay, flex time, and the activity itself (Kuvaas, Buch, Weibel, Dysvik, & Nerstad, 2017). Essentially, intrinsic motivation involves a task that an employee is interested in because of the skill and perceived autonomy one can have when performing a job high in intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation is based off of performance and results of the job, where reinforcement like praise, job title, or recognition, dominates motivation of the self (Kuvaas et al., 2017). Both motivational factors are inversely related so there cannot be high intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in the workplace according to the Self-Determination Theory (Kuvaas et al., 2017). The proposed study would seek to identify a difference in job satisfaction and motivation between low-income and medium income employees and provide possible directions for improving said variables in the workplace. We hypothesize that individuals with medium income will have higher job satisfaction and motivation than individuals classified as low income. For the purposes of this proposal, low income will be \$0 - \$44,999 and medium income will be \$45,000 - \$139,999 (Amadeo, 2019).

Using an independent samples t-test design, this study will utilize subjects from various food service businesses and retail businesses that are based in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The two conditions that are met will be low income and medium income. The potential subjects will be incentivized to complete two surveys, the 36-item Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1994) and the 18-item Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS) designed by Tremblay, Blanchard, Taylor, Pelletier, & Villeneuve (2009). The Job Satisfaction Survey will be used to measure and assess employee satisfaction while the WEIMS will be used to measure intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, determining if either form of motivation is present and how much is being used.

Upon the completion of the study, directions for future research will be given and implications based off of data will be given.

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